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OCCUPY WALL STREET  
AGENDA  
PETER J. HANSEN

# the weekly standard

NOVEMBER 14, 2011

\$4.95

## THEY CAN DO IT...

...if Washington  
stays the course

MAX BOOT  
reports from  
Afghanistan

Troops from the 1st Battalion,  
6th Marines during a battle  
in Marjah, February 22, 2010.

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*With the aid of scientific research over the years, people have learned that the functioning of natural laws controls their resulting right or wrong output when their input conforms to that specific law or instead is somehow noncompliant.*

Examples with regard to laws of physics such as gravity, chemistry, and electricity probably come to mind.

Since the created laws of physics are autonomous and self-enforcing, people have learned to carefully conform to each law of physics to ensure their safety and well-being.

*What only a comparatively few people have learned is that there is a little-known, overweening natural law that controls the right or wrong results that develop from our every thought and action.*

In the past century, the late Richard W. Wetherill identified a *natural law of behavior* that he and now a group of his former students have been presenting to the public for several decades. But despite the fact that nearly 300,000 people worldwide have visited our Website as of October 2011, more people are needed that understand the law's basic message and will help by sending others to our Website: alphapub.com.

*Nature's behavioral law is also autonomous and self-enforcing* as evidenced by people's failures to resolve their wrong results, destroying one civilization after another.

The use of every philosophical, scientific, practical, or religious approach of man did not nor could not resolve society's escalating problems and trouble. Today, levels of crime, corruption, mental disorders, and rebellious rioting continue

spiraling upward in our growing population. What a depressing list of wrong results!

But, "Be of good cheer, the solution is here." It is found in *creation's natural law of absolute right* mentioned above.

Could the entire human race have been consistently defying that natural law for eons? The brief answer is "yes." And that defiance is stopped only when people accord to nature's behavioral law, calling for their attitude and behavior to comply with creation's law of absolute right.

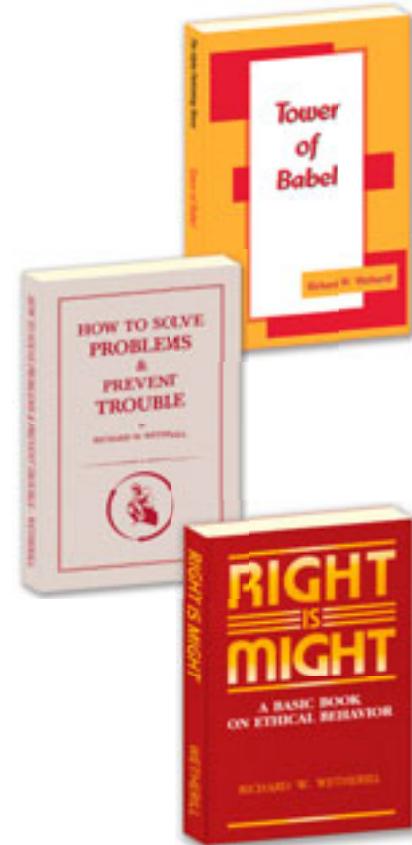
In order to survive, this civilization must conform to the creator's formula for life, calling for behavior that the *law deems is rational and honest* in what is thought, said, and done.

Prevalent blocks preventing people from conforming are their desires to get their way or to get notoriety and credit for what they believe are *their* efforts: money, careers, and prominent positions. All such prideful behavior is inappropriate when you consider that everybody's very existence is a gift of creation.

*There needs to be a realization that in the end, people have been paying with their lives for their misbehavior, regarding the law of absolute right.*

*That tells it like it is!*

*Whether anybody likes it or not, only rational, honest people are able to serve the purposes of creation's plan of life.*



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*This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of Mr. Wetherill.*



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COVER: REUTERS / GORAN TOMASEVIC



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# For Better or for a Couple of Months

THE SCRAPBOOK, which is a strong believer in the institution of marriage, couldn't help but notice the collapse of the 72-day-old union of Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries last week. Readers will be forgiven for not necessarily recognizing the name of either the groom or bride—he's a second-tier professional basketball player, she is difficult to characterize in a single phrase—but anyone who has stood recently in a supermarket checkout line or watched cable television should be aware of their glittering nuptials (Lindsay Lohan attended!) and the now-disputed price of the 20.5-carat wedding ring (\$2 million).

Anyhow, after all the fabulous parties and sponsored accoutrements and exclusive coverage of the ceremony near Santa Barbara, it turns out that Miss Kardashian and Mr. Humphries are less compatible than they might have hoped. And so she has filed for divorce, he has publicly complained that he still loves her, and the bride's mother has set the re-

cord straight on the value of the wedding ring ("It was not \$2 million; it was less than half of that").

Another celebrity marriage gone with the wind.

But not so fast. Somewhat to THE SCRAPBOOK's surprise, the public reaction to this high-profile domestic calamity has been not sympathy, or even humor, but anger—directed especially at the bride, who has been accused of staging a "sham" wedding, and breaking the heart of poor Mr. Humphries, in order to harvest some impressive swag and publicize whatever it is she does.

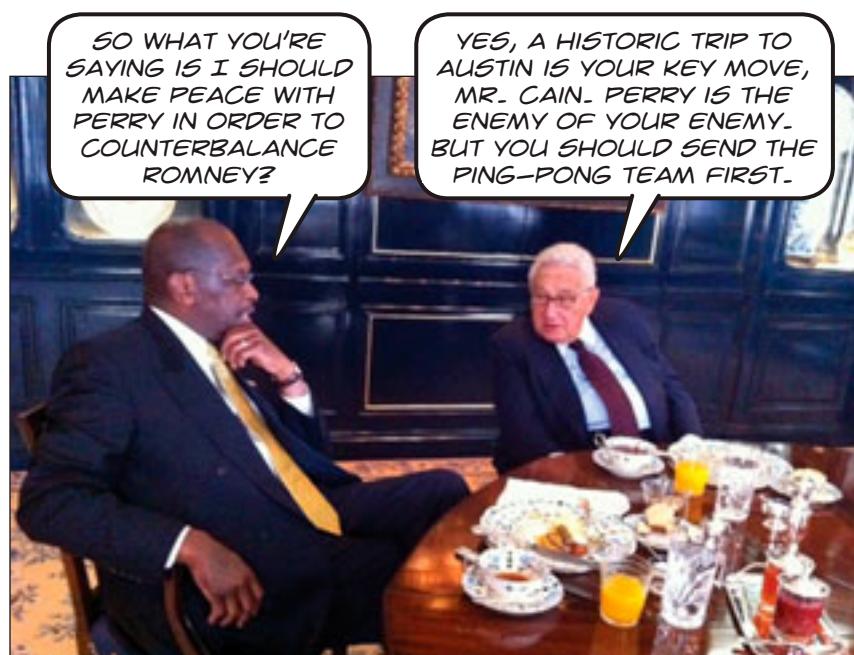
THE SCRAPBOOK is puzzled by the public indignation, and for two historic reasons. First, in the realm of high-profile celebritydom, enduring marriages—say, unions lasting longer than five years—are the exception, not the rule: For every Bob and Dolores Hope there are two dozen Jennifer Lopez and fill-in-the-blanks. And while the Humphries-Kardashian merger was exception-

ally brief, even by those standards, it was hardly unprecedented.

In fact, being of a certain age, THE SCRAPBOOK was reminded of two other famous marriages that ended before the bills were paid. In 1952 the glamorous Metropolitan Opera stars Roberta Peters and Robert Merrill wed one another, to the delight of America's consumers of High Culture—and separated after two months. (The fact that Miss Peters's mother reportedly accompanied them on the honeymoon couldn't have helped.) And in 1964 the great Broadway belter Ethel Merman and Ernest Borgnine (then starring on TV's *McHale's Navy*) got married in Las Vegas—and began proceedings to get unmarried 32 days later.

In contrast to the current crisis, the public reaction to those two marital debacles was good-natured laughter: Who could not smile at the incompatibility of two operatic soloists, or the star of *Annie Get Your Gun* locking horns with Commander McHale? A half-century ago there seems to have been some recognition that love (or something close to it) can lead to foolishness, and that human beings make occasional mistakes. Now the public is furious when it learns that celebrities are in the business of being celebrities, and that Hollywood occasionally puts on a show. ♦

## What They Were Saying



COURTESY CAIN CAMPAIGN

## Just the Facts

Herman Cain was the source of a controversy last week . . . well, a controversy other than the one you were probably thinking of. On October 30, Cain reaffirmed to CBS's Bob Schieffer on *Face the Nation* that it was his belief that Planned Parenthood was founded with the purpose of aborting black children in disproportionate numbers.

Wherever would Cain get such a crazy idea? Well, let's start with Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, who was a well-known

advocate of eugenics. Her writings are littered with talk of birth control as a matter of “racial hygiene,” “cultivation of better racial elements,” “a cleaner race,” and “the solution of racial . . . problems.” There’s also the small matter of that time when Sanger fretted, “We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population.” (Sanger’s defenders say the context suggests that she didn’t actually want to exterminate the entire black race, just its less desirable elements, or something.)

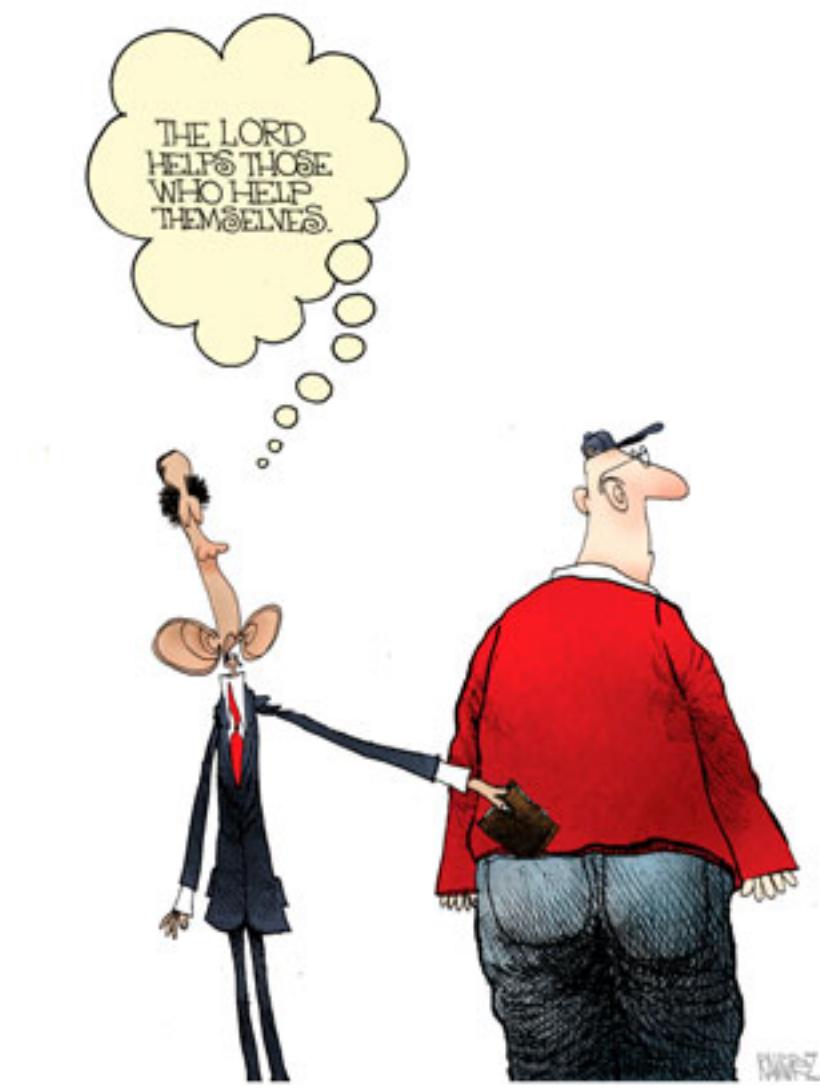
It’s long been one of liberalism’s most inconvenient facts that the modern family planning movement was largely founded on an ideology that Hitler also found agreeable. Naturally, whenever someone has the temerity to point this out, and heaven forfend it be done by a black man, out come the spin doctors.

Or rather, the “fact checkers.” THE SCRAPBOOK has a hard time telling the difference these days. Glenn Kessler, author of the *Washington Post*’s Fact Checker blog, gave Cain “four Pinocchios” for stating (accurately) that Sanger “did talk about preventing the increasing number of poor blacks in this country by preventing black babies from being born.”

Kessler defended and downplayed Sanger’s statements in support of eugenics. His sourcing leaned so heavily on Planned Parenthood it wouldn’t be surprising if they dictated the response to him. Kessler even called Sanger—we’re not making this up—a “racial pioneer” for her work with black organizations in the early 20th century. Of course, Kessler doesn’t mention that many of the black leaders she worked with at the time, such as W.E.B. DuBois, were eugenicists themselves.

It further goes unsaid that Sanger tried to realize her birth control ambitions by speaking to that other hearty band of racial pioneers, the Ku Klux Klan. As Planned Parenthood would have us believe, Sanger was really a uniter, not a divider.

At the very least, Margaret Sanger still has the power to bring the liberal media together, if only to shore



up the façade that Planned Parenthood has the best of intentions. In addition to Kessler, Factcheck.org and PolitiFact also seized on Cain’s comments with equally mind-bending sophistry.

Here are some facts that almost no one in the major media saw fit to raise in relation to Herman Cain’s comments. According to the Centers for Disease Control, black women get 40 percent of the nation’s abortions even though they comprise only 13 percent of the population. Fully 60 percent of all black pregnancies in New York City last year ended in abortion. Whether the media want to confront it or not, there are dramatically fewer black Americans thanks to the legacy of Margaret Sanger. ♦

## Mac the Knife

Mac McGarry has been a fixture in Washington, D.C., households for 50 years. A television announcer on the local NBC affiliate, McGarry took a job hosting the Saturday morning quiz show *It's Academic* in 1961. He hasn't looked back. *It's Academic*, in which teams from local high schools answer trivia questions for scholarship money, is reportedly the oldest such program on the tube. Actress Sandra Bullock, *Washington Post* CEO Donald Graham, and sportswriter Tom Boswell—not to mention THE SCRAPBOOK’s colleague Matthew Continetti—have all made appearances. Last week it was announced that the show will go

on, but without McGarry. At 85, he's decided to retire.

We wish it weren't so. McGarry was conservative in demeanor and effect. He wasn't flashy. His game show emphasized the importance of knowledge and learning. Nor were the questions mere "trivia." Ranging from history to literature to art to science to mathematics, they challenged talented high school students to discover the breadth and depth of the Western tradition in a way the students might not always have done in the classroom.

The festive atmosphere, with a studio audience, cheerleaders, and school bands, allowed bookworms and science geeks to experience something like the thrill of varsity sports competition. McGarry set a standard for excellence that his



Mac McGarry

successor, local radio anchor Hillary Howard, will have to work hard to meet. We'll miss him. ♦



McQuade, left; Dannenfelser, right

## Correction

A photo accompanying our November 7 cover story on the pro-life movement was miscaptioned. The photo was of Deirdre A. McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications at the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and not of Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, as indicated. THE WEEKLY STANDARD regrets the error. ♦

## The United States once again can establish a stable dollar worth its weight in gold.

### *"The True Gold Standard."*

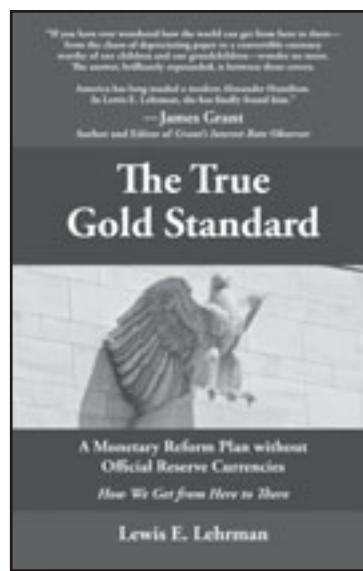
Buy it... it is a compelling read and a compelling architecture for a way forward."

— Lou Dobbs

After almost a century of manipulated paper- and credit-based currencies, how do nations—which need the benefits of free trade in order to prosper—terminate the anarchy of volatile, depreciating, floating exchange rates? How do the same nations stage the resumption of a true gold standard, without the escalating debt and leverage of official reserve currencies?

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MCQUADE, NEWSCOM; DANNENFELSER, COURTESY SUSAN B. ANTHONY LIST

## Kindle at the Cleaners

The other day I asked my five-years-younger-than-I brother—the wit in our family—if he had taken to using a Kindle. “My Kindle,” he said, “is at the cleaners.” I’m not sure why I found that funny, but I did, and still do, and take it that he means he would never think of using this new aid to reading with which so many people are so very pleased.

If I owned a Kindle, I, too, would take it to the cleaners but never bother to pick it up. I’m sure that this miraculous new device has lots to be said for it in the realm of convenience (many books can be stored in it at once) and ease of handling (it’s much lighter than most hardcover books), but electronically is not the way I prefer to read books.

Some of my own books are available on Kindle, though I have never attempted to glimpse them in digital form. Years ago I had a few books on tape and thought what a pleasing snack it might be to my XXL ego to drive around town listening to my own scribblings being read aloud by an out-of-work actor. I listened to one for about three minutes and couldn’t bear it, so different were the actor’s reading rhythms from those I heard when writing the words he was now, so to say, misspeaking.

I doubt that I would fare any better reading myself on Kindle. I wonder if I am alone in finding digital printing an invitation to skim. When I have a book or magazine in hand, I generally read every word, attentive not alone to meaning but to style. In digital form, prose has a different feel; style gives way to mere communication. If I discover an essay or article on, say, artsandlettersdaily.com that runs to more than 25 paragraphs, by the fifteenth paragraph or so I feel a tug of impatience I rarely feel with printed prose. The idea of

reading serious poetry online doesn’t even qualify as an abomination.

The bias of ebooks, at least for now, is toward bestsellers, contemporary books, and standard classics. Most of the books I read are old, many of them out of the mainstream. At the moment I happen to be reading Primo Levi’s *The Periodic Table* and Emmanuel Ringelblum’s *Notes from the Warsaw*



*Ghetto.* I haven’t checked, but I suspect both are unkindled, or unkindleable.

I read books with a pencil in hand and a few small pieces of paper, on which I make occasional notes, for a bookmark. I make light markings—sidelining, it’s called—alongside what I think significant passages. None of this can be done on a Kindle. I keep books in my bathroom, others on my night table. I like the look of books, the heft of them in my hands, their different sizes and various fonts and dust jackets, the smell of them.

Mine is a neighborhood with a small number of excellent used-book stores, which the Kindle, should its use continue to spread, will eventually

help put out of business. The supermarket bookstores, in a similar way, helped put the independent booksellers out of business; and now the online booksellers are putting the supermarket bookstores out of business. Thus do big fish swallow smaller ones, until in the end one large fish—let us call it Amazon.com/kindle—will remain. Sometimes, as Adam Smith failed to point out, the invisible hand of the market has jagged and dirty fingernails.

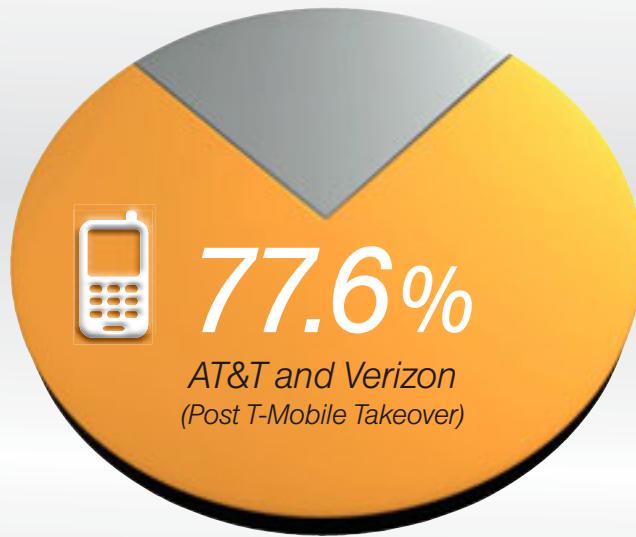
If more and more books are sold online and read on Kindles, Nooks, and other such devices, a serious source of education will be obliterated. My friend Edward Shils once set out the four main forms of education in the modern world: the classroom, the intelligent conversation of friends, serious magazines and journals, and new and used book shops. In my education, the latter two—magazines and journals, new and used book shops—have been more important than the others.

In bookstores, especially used-book stores, one discovers books and writers one never knew existed in a way one can’t on a Kindle. One day in a dingy local bookstore, I found a book called *Rome and Pompeii: Archeological Rambles* by a writer named Gaston Boissier, a nineteenth-century French classicist. Opening it, I came upon the following sentence about Horace: “He desired retirement with a passion which cannot but surprise us in a sage who professed to wish for nothing with too much ardor.” This sentence sold me on the book, which I bought straightaway. I have gone on to read other of Gaston Boissier’s books, always with pleasure and, I like to think, intellectual profit. Such discoveries through sampling aren’t likely to be made digitally.

The cheerful choreography of progress proceeds: one step forward, two steps back. “Get thy Kindle,” as a latterday Hamlet might have said to Ophelia, “to the cleaners.”

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

*Two companies controlling  
this much wireless industry revenue  
creates a one-sided conversation.*



*Wireless*



*Oil*



*Airline*



*Banking*



*Auto*

*AT&T's proposed takeover of T-Mobile would result in two companies controlling more than 77% of wireless industry revenues. In other major industries, the two top firms control much less.*

*Two wireless industry giants would marginalize the ability of other providers to keep prices competitive for consumers and influence the pace of wireless industry innovation.*

*This is a bad idea for consumers, competition and our country.*

Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.

Oil source: [www.alacra.com/acm/2042\\_sample.pdf](http://www.alacra.com/acm/2042_sample.pdf), page 22. Note: data includes oil refining and gas.

Airline source: DOT, form 41, Schedule P-1.2.

Banking source: DATAMONITOR'S "Banks in the United States" and [www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp](http://www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp).

Auto source: SEC 10-K filings, (includes cars and trucks and may include other revenue streams).

Foreign currencies converted to dollars using prevailing exchange rates.



# About Inequality

Over the last few weeks the ground of American politics has shifted to the left. The process began when President Obama's tour to promote his jobs bill improved his standing in some polls and forced Republicans to play defense. Next came Occupy Wall Street, which gave the media an excuse to put questions of "social justice" at the top of their agenda. The Congressional Budget Office then released a report highlighting increased income inequality and seeming to prove Occupy Wall Street's claim that the top 1 percent of Americans might as well live in a different country. Toss in a couple glimmers of economic hope—an improved third-quarter GDP number, a slightly falling unemployment rate—and the recipe for the left-liberal revival was set.

The right? Caught off guard. Too quick to dismiss the occupiers, too convinced that the bad economy will doom Obama's reelection, too distracted by the silliness of the Republican primary, too beholden to the egalitarian assumptions of the left, Republicans and conservatives have not responded coherently to the arguments put forward by their newly invigorated opponents. Only Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, in a major speech at the Heritage Foundation on October 26, sounded the alarm: "Sowing social unrest and class resentment makes America weaker, not stronger," he said. "Pitting one group against another only distracts us from the true sources of inequity in this country—corporate welfare that enriches the powerful, and empty promises that betray the powerless."

Ryan is just one man. The rebuttal to Obama, Occupy Wall Street, and other eminent egalitarians cannot be left to him alone. How to respond when Paul Krugman writes in the *New York Times* that income inequality puts "the whole nature of our society" at risk? Who will challenge George Packer's self-contradiction when he writes in *Foreign Affairs*, "By contemporary standards, life in 1978 was inconvenient, constrained, and ugly.... But from where we stand in 2011, [it looks] pretty good" because the distribution of income was more equal then than it is today? Who will confront the left on the nature of equality?

What too many have done is accept the premise that the purpose of government is to lessen inequalities of goods. To

dispute the studies on income inequality is not to deny the presupposition on which those studies rest. To argue that "income inequality is a myth" is to imply that, if income inequality were *not* a myth, there would be a problem. As soon as one runs to social science's vast library of Babel, where a study can be found to prove practically anything, one is conceding valuable ground.

Another group of conservatives has no problem with such concessions. They grant that the social science is right and that American society should be more egalitarian. They differ with the liberals only in the kind of measures they would have government take to address inequality. Where the liberals would increase taxes to fund universal health care and pensions and welfare, the conservatives would increase only some taxes, means-test entitlements, spend more money on education, and try to arrest through government action the erosion of the two-parent family. As soon as they make these proposals, however, they expose themselves to the argument that such policies are not enough. And if that is the case, and if a more

equal society is a laudable goal, these "small-government egalitarians" have backed themselves into one day accepting the liberals' means to achieve the liberals' ends.

The way out is to reject the assumption that government's purpose is to redress inequalities of income. Inequalities of condition are a fact of life. Some people will always be poorer than others. So too, human altruism will always seek to alleviate the suffering of the destitute. There is a place for reasonable and prudent actions to improve well-being. But that does not mean the entire structure of our polity should be designed to achieve an egalitarian ideal. Such a goal is fantastic, utopian even, and one would think that the trillions of dollars the United States has spent in vain over the last 50 years to promote "equality as a fact and equality as a result" would give the egalitarians pause.

That it has not provides a clue as to why the passion for equality is so strong. This debate really has nothing to do with the facts on the ground, nor is it restricted to any particular place or time. "The simple truth is that the professional classes of our modern bureaucratized societies are engaged in a class struggle with the business community for



status and power. Inevitably, this class struggle is conducted under the banner of ‘equality.’” That is Irving Kristol, writing in 1973—back in George Packer’s lost paradise. The leveling spirit, in other words, is coeval with the inequalities of condition that are part of the human experience. Suppose we could go back to the income distribution of 1978. Does anyone think for a second that the 18-year-old George Packer wouldn’t be caterwauling for even more “equality”?

When Paul Krugman writes that “extreme concentration of income is incompatible with real democracy,” he has a point. It was Aristotle who observed that inequality and democracy were volatile in combination, because the poor multitude would try to redistribute the wealth of the rich few. That is why, in his view, democracies were prone to collapsing into either anarchy or tyranny. Aristotle’s answer to this problem was the mixed regime, which combined elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy and thus promoted stability.

The Founders of this nation also understood the problematic relation between democracy and inequality. Their solution was a large constitutional republic whose “first object of government” was the protection of the “diversity in faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate.” The separation of enumerated powers, federalism, and a strong dose of virtue in the citizenry and their representatives would be the guarantors of the natural rights of mankind.

We have strayed so far from this view that our energies are no longer directed to the equal protection of rights but the equal provision of things. We have strayed so far that before embarking on quests to reengineer America neither the left nor the right even thinks to pose the question of *Federalist 6*: “Have we not already seen enough of the fallacy and extravagance of those idle theories which have amused us with promises of an exemption from the imperfections, the weaknesses, and the evils incident to society in every shape? Is it not time to awake from the deceitful dream of a golden age and to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue?”

—Matthew Continetti

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## It’s Not 1980 Anymore

For every Southern boy 14 years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it’s still not yet two o’clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready

in the woods and the furred flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it’s all in the balance, it hasn’t happened yet, it hasn’t even begun yet, it not only hasn’t begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances which made more men than Garnett and Kemper and Armstead and Wilcox look grave yet it’s going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake and that moment doesn’t need even a 14-year-old boy to think *This time. Maybe this time* with all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbelievable victory the desperate gamble, the cast made two years ago . . .

—William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*

For every American conservative, not once but whenever he wants it, it’s always the evening of November 4, 1980, the instant when we knew Ronald Reagan, the man who gave the speech in the lost cause of 1964, leader of the movement since 1966, derided by liberal elites and despised by the Republican establishment, the moment when we knew—he’d won, we’d won, the impossible dream was possible, the desperate gamble of modern conservatism might pay off, conservatism had a chance, America had a chance. And then, a decade later—the Cold War won, the economy revived, America led out of the abyss, we’d come so far with so much at stake—conservatism vindicated, America restored, a desperate and unbelievable victory for the cast made so many years ago against such odds.

But that was then, and this is now. Now is 2012, and it seems clear that 2012 isn’t going to be another 1980. The reality seems to be that we’re not going to have a chance to replay that election, with (at least in the hazy glow of retrospect) a compelling conservative leader of long standing but ever youthful, a man who stood tall and spoke for us and for America, riding gracefully to victory over the GOP establishment in the primaries and over decadent liberalism in the general election. Assuming the presidential field stays as it is, 2012 won’t be a repeat of 1980.

Which is not to say that 2012 can’t be a good, even a very good, election for conservatives and for the country. There are other models for victory. In 1992 an incumbent president was soundly defeated by an impressive though flawed candidate who emerged from a weak field, after leading lights in his party refused to run (Cuomo, Bradley, Gore, Gephardt). Bill Clinton doesn’t provide a model of successful governance for the next Republican president—the next president is going to have to lead, not accommodate—but he does suggest another, less elegant model than 1980 for the defeat of an incompetent incumbent.

And then there’s 1932, when a not particularly distinguished four-year governor who’d zigged and zagged back and forth to be acceptable to large parts of the Democratic

party, and whose political career was at first based partly on his last name, defeated another incumbent. Franklin Roosevelt did turn out to be a consequential president—because of the nature of the challenges he faced, because the country was ready for fundamental change, because there was a movement behind him (or ahead of him) that was full of ideas and energy, because there were strong representatives of that movement in Congress and in state-houses, and because he rose to the occasion.

These other models for conservative success in 2012 need to be studied for their lessons and adapted to our times. Reversing Obama's weakness abroad, repealing Obamacare, restoring solvency and prosperity and limiting government at home, these are tasks too important not to be achieved because of our nostalgic disappointment that we will not, in 2012, replay a moment that is not to be again—and that perhaps never truly was.

Still, for every conservative of a certain age, there is the instant when it's Election Day 1980, and the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out....

—William Kristol

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## The Romney Plan

Is this finally a Mitt Romney that conservatives can love? Or at least support?

Governor Romney spoke last week in Washington to a group closely associated with the Tea Party. And, for the first time, he sounded like a Tea Party candidate, proposing serious spending cuts and—this is important—embracing structural entitlement reform with specific policy proposals.

He's not Ron Paul, whose plan calls for the elimination of five cabinet agencies, or even Jon Huntsman, who has offered a full, unqualified embrace of Paul Ryan's "Path to Prosperity" budget.

But neither of those men has any chance of being the Republican nominee. Mitt Romney has a strong chance—and with each passing day that eventuality seems more and more likely. What he says on these issues matters. Cheers for Romney.

Romney says he'll reduce nonsecurity discretionary spending to 20 percent of America's gross domestic product by 2016, down from more than 24 percent today. This will require real cuts, and Romney says he's prepared to make them. In the first of what assuredly will be dozens of "day one" promises, Romney pledges on the first day

of his presidency to send Congress a proposal that would immediately cut nonsecurity discretionary spending by five percent. He would also push a provision in the budget passed by House Republicans that would return nonsecurity discretionary spending to pre-Obama levels. He wants to cut the federal workforce by 10 percent and cut the pay of those who remain.

All good. But in the current political environment, with even Barack Obama pretending to favor smaller government, such proposals are not exactly risky. And, more to the point, taken alone they won't change the long-term trajectory of U.S. debt. Fortunately, Romney took the bolder and riskier step of including some specific entitlement reforms in his plan, too.

His plans, like those championed by the House GOP, would not affect current beneficiaries or those approaching retirement. But for younger workers, Romney's Social Security reform proposes to "slowly raise the retirement age" and "slow[ing] the growth in benefits for those with higher incomes." And on Medicare, Romney supports a version of the premium support plan at the heart of the Ryan budget. Romney's plan, unlike Ryan's, would preserve something like the current Medicare as one of the options for seniors. "Younger Americans today, when they turn 65, should have a choice between traditional Medicare and other private health care plans that provide at least the same level of benefits," he said in his speech.

It's not a trivial difference. There are reasons to worry that the competition fostered by a premium support model would be undermined by a government-run option. But the similarities between Ryan and Romney outweigh the differences. And because Romney's plan is a fixed, defined contribution plan, it controls costs in part by changing spending incentives.

Ryan, for his part, is enthusiastic. He spoke to Romney before the speech. "It's a great development that tracks very well with our budget and includes the same kind of spending controls," he tells us.

We agree: This is an important step. But we also agree with Ryan when he says that he hopes Romney will offer more specifics as the campaign moves forward. More specifics carry more risks, of course, and there are reasons to be concerned that Romney won't be willing to take them. On a conference call Friday to promote the Romney plan, a reporter asked former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty why Romney decided to leave traditional Medicare as an option in his premium support model. You do that, Pawlenty explained, "so you don't get into the situation with Congressman Ryan's plan where there's criticism that people will get thrown off Medicare."

Political considerations matter, to be sure. But they can also be awfully shortsighted. Why not own the argument? Why not make it forcefully? As Ryan put it, laughing: "Believe me, they'll get hit with that anyway."

—Stephen F. Hayes

# Come on in, the Earth Is Fine

With its 7 billionth person stunt,  
the U.N. boosts the overpopulation hysteria.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST



Last week the United Nations Population Fund released a report heralding the birth of the world's 7 billionth person. The milestone is important, the United Nations explains, because their calculations now project that global population is likely to hit 9.3 billion by 2050 and could go as high as 15.8 billion by

the end of the century. As you might imagine, these dire warnings were greeted with eager and solicitous concern by the alarmist media.

"Population Growth Taxing Planet's Resources," announced one *Washington Post* story. CNN tried to contextualize the number 7 billion by helpfully informing readers, "Seven billion ants, at an average size of 3 milligrams each, would weigh at least 23 tons (46,297 pounds)." Why

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at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

a pretend pile of insects? "Population experts are hoping that more people begin to grasp the 7 billion concept soon, because the number has skyrocketed in recent years and the situation is becoming more urgent." The *New York Times* carried a debate on overpopulation in which the Population Institute's William Ryerson argued that societies with fertility rates below the replacement level—which is to say every industrialized nation in the world—must not try to increase their fertility because to do so will cause "serious environmental and social problems."

The nub of these arguments is that the world is overcrowded, and there is not enough water, food, energy, or land to sustain an asymptotically increasing population. Happy to go the full Malthus, MSNBC wheeled out a buffet of essays on the subject. The package featured Paul Ehrlich, who testified that "seven billion people is already facing us with horrendous problems, including almost 1 billion people hungry and contributing greatly to the chances of catastrophic climate disruption." He warned that "a global civilization is in peril" and argued that all governments should adopt the slogan "patriotic citizens stop at two children" while imposing penalties on "over-reproducers and those unethical elements in society that are pro-natalist."

Following Ehrlich was a piece by actress Alexandra Paul, who argued that Ehrlich's "only have two" plan—which would merely hold population constant—was madness. She insisted that "we must work to lower the world population to 2 billion." Meaning that of every ten people alive today, she wants seven scrubbed from the face of the earth.

Ehrlich's intellectual authority stems from a book he wrote in 1968 which claimed that overpopulation would kill "hundreds of millions" of people in a matter of months. Paul's derives from the fact she once played a lifeguard with skin cancer on a Very Special Episode of *Baywatch*. It is difficult to say which is the bigger fool.

GARY LOCKE

Then again, foolishness envelops nearly every popular discussion of demographics these days.

To understand what 7 billion people means, it's useful to have a sense of population history. It took nearly 500,000 years for the world's population to hit 5 million, which it did some time around 8,000 B.C. Human life was plenty nasty and brutish back then, but it was the shortness that mattered most. The reason it took so long to get to 5 million was that it was devilishly hard to keep 5 million people alive all at once. But the advent of agriculture improved access to food, which produced gains in health and longevity, which led to a pickup in the rate of population growth: From 8,000 B.C. to the age of Julius Caesar (45 B.C., give or take) the world's population grew to somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 million.

That growth rate continued more or less from Caesar, through the Middle Ages, until about 1750—bringing the total number of people on our little blue ball of mud to 800 million. But with the 18th century, the pace began to pick up again. This time by a lot. We crossed the threshold of 1 billion around 1825. And while it took thousands of years to get a billion people alive at the same time, it only took another 100 years to get to 2 billion, which is where we stood in 1925. The third billion was added even faster: We hit that milestone in 1960 and have been off to the races ever since.

But the post-1750 population explosion was not caused by more babies being born. It was the result of declining mortality. As nutrition, sanitation, and medicine improved, people began living longer. In ancient Rome, life expectancy was about 25 years. In 19th-century England it was 40 years—an increase of barely 60 percent over the course of 2,000 years. Since then, the average life expectancy in the first world has just about doubled in less than two centuries. As demographers Nathan Keyfitz and Wilhelm Flieger once sardonically

noted, the explosion in population after 1750 was “due to death control’s exceeding birth control.” Or, as Nicholas Eberstadt put it, people didn’t suddenly start breeding like rabbits; they stopped dying like flies.

The decline in mortality created what is known as demographic momentum, as entire generations remained in the ranks of the living where they once would have quickly passed away. Seen in this light, complaints about overpopulation are really complaints that people now grow old before dying.

**While total population keeps increasing, the rate of increase has slowed dramatically. What the U.N. isn't advertising is that over the last few decades population growth has consistently lagged behind projections. The real story of the 7 billionth birth is that fertility rates have fallen so far that population has been growing much more slowly than anyone predicted.**

But no one wants to send Grandpa to the wolves, and besides, people like Paul Ehrlich and Alexandra Paul seem to enjoy living, even if it means a slow descent into decrepitude. So instead of admitting that the “problem” is people living too long, they claim that we’re all in trouble because people are having too many babies. Only they’re wrong about that, too.

The collapse of the death rate was in fact followed by a collapse of the fertility rate. Around the time of the industrial revolution, women began bearing steadily fewer children. In America, for instance, the average white woman had 7.04 children in 1800. By 1944, that number had eased

to 2.22. This gradual decline became an absolute collapse once the Baby Boom ended. Since 1970, the fertility rate has dropped by more than 50 percent in nearly every country in the world. In many countries the decline has been closer to 75 percent. In some countries fertility rates have reached “lowest-low”—which is to say, lower than has ever been seen in human history. Today, no first-world country has a fertility rate above the replacement level of 2.1. Most developing countries are still above that mark, but are falling, fast.

Which means that, while total population keeps increasing, the rate of increase has slowed dramatically. Seven billion people may seem like a lot, but what the U.N. isn’t advertising is that over the last few decades population growth has consistently lagged *behind* projections. The U.N.’s 1994 model, for instance, had us hitting the 7 billion mark nearly three years ago. The real story of the 7 billionth birth is that fertility rates have fallen so far that population has been growing much more slowly than anyone predicted. And, as a corollary, this sluggish growth is likely to disappear as global population peaks, and then begins contracting.

Indeed, nearly every population model in recent years has suggested that, between 2050 and 2075, world population will top out at 9 billion to 12 billion. And after that it will begin shrinking.

Until a few months ago, the U.N.’s model predicted pretty much the same thing. But when the United Nations Population Division released its 2010 revision, it changed course. It now projects that population decline probably won’t materialize in the next 90 years. Instead, the new model suggests that world population will keep growing all the way through 2100. And once the U.N. Population Fund—that’s the political action arm to the Population Division’s research shop—got hold of these numbers, it rushed to publicize them. Thus the creation of the 7 billionth birth media sensation, which the Population Fund “symbolically” scheduled for October 31. (They

are as obvious as they are earnest.)

The symbolic date is worth mentioning because the Population Fund admits it actually has very little idea when the 7 billionth person will be (or was) born. They believe their calculations have a 1 percent margin of error—which means that the birth could have happened six months ago. Or might not happen for another six months. But never mind; to go with their pretend day, they anointed a little girl born in the Philippines as the pretend 7 billionth baby. The Population Fund loves symbolism so much that this little girl was only the first of several “symbolic” 7 billionth babies it recognized across the globe.

All of which is worth keeping in mind when you consider the methodology of the U.N.’s latest population projection. In order to upend decades of data projecting world population contraction, the U.N. had to assume that over the next 70 years, in every part of the world where the fertility rate is now below 2.1, fertility will steadily increase to the replacement level. Starting tomorrow. The model supposes this for countries both big and small, secular and religious, with massive amounts of immigration and with no immigration. It assumes this amazing reversal even for countries such as Poland, which is working on 60 consecutive years of declining fertility.

How did the demographers at Turtle Bay come up with such a counter-intuitive prediction? They looked at a handful of countries—mostly in Scandinavia—which had low fertility rates in the 1930s, but have somewhat recovered today. They then assumed that the rest of the world—Italy, Singapore, China, Iran, Costa Rica, Russia—will follow the same fertility path as Sweden.

Now, who knows, maybe this assumption—however improbable—will prove correct. But it seems more likely that, like most of the population projections of the last 40 years, it will overshoot the mark. Not that the overpopulation hysterics will notice. The 8 billionth birth is just around the symbolic corner. ♦

# The Tory Rebellion

Cameron picked a bad time to make his party more Europe-friendly. **BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL**



Prime Minister David Cameron arriving in Brussels, October 23

**O**n Thursday, no one in Parliament was talking about anything except the mess in Greece and the impending collapse of the euro. A couple of Tory members were telling me why it was inevitable that the European currency would break up—and soon—when word spread that their colleague Mark Hoban, a minister in the Treasury, had made a terrible gaffe. Responding to a hostile question about whether Britain would ever join the common European currency, Hoban had replied: “I don’t think there is any intention for us to join the euro at the time when it is breaking up.” In short, the country’s ruling party finds itself in a position where it is not supposed to say things that all of its members know.

At almost any other moment of the

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past quarter-century, Britain’s Tories would be reaping an electoral bonanza from the European Union’s troubles. Since Margaret Thatcher’s time they have been the most Euroskeptic party in any major European country, and now events are leading Britons to see things their way. The EU’s leaders, particularly Nicolas Sarkozy, looked antidemocratic last week when they hammered Greek president George Papandreou’s proposal to consult his citizens over a major international obligation. But Europe has not shown its best face to Britain for a long time. A poll taken by the socialist Fabian Society a year ago found that more than twice as many U.K. citizens saw EU membership as a “bad thing” than saw it as a “good thing.” In recent weeks, Sarkozy has been campaigning for a Europe-wide financial transaction tax that would pay for development aid to poor countries—and since London dominates the banking sector of Europe, at least 60 percent of NEWS.COM

that tax would be collected in Britain.

But the Tories have a problem. For the first time since the premiership of Edward Heath in the early 1970s, a Conservative-led government is pursuing Europe-friendly policies. Rather than leading Britain into war against the euro, Tory backbenchers have had to wage a rebellion against their party leader, Prime Minister David Cameron. Cameron has long been an ideological mystery. Like Barack Obama, he comes out of the red-hot partisan core of his party, but campaigned as a centrist who would reach out to political opponents. Whereas Obama

**Whatever the reason for Cameron's tepidity on Europe, it is costing him in public opinion. Fifty-five percent of voters say he is out of touch.**

rushed back to his partisan allies after being elected, Cameron has loitered in the center, reaching out to his party's foes. At the Conservative party conference this fall he called for gay marriage. He has attacked banks for their greed. He has an energy policy that focuses on climate change rather than energy prices. And he has long promised to stop his party from—in his words—"banging on about Europe." This is a promise that he has kept.

Partly out of necessity. Cameron's Tories fared worse than expected in last year's elections, forcing them into a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The Lib Dems, as they are called, are the most Europhile party in English politics. What is more, when Tony Blair's support for the Iraq war created an opening for an antiwar party on the left, the Lib Dems filled it. One Tory described Labour to me as the party of his adversaries and the Lib Dems as the party of his enemies. Their leader, Nick Clegg, who has a Dutch mother and a Spanish wife, urged last week that Britain forge closer ties with Europe, arguing that

Britain has America's ear only when it can show it is listened to by Europe. This does not mean he sees the United States as unworthy of emulation: Clegg has lately been attacked in the newspapers over a £36 million loan to a steel company in his constituency that would create 50 [sic] jobs.

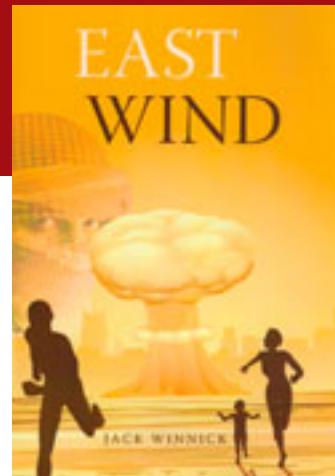
Whether Cameron's tepidity on Europe has to do with conviction or the realities of coalition politics, it is costing him in public opinion. Fifty-five percent of voters say he is out of touch. He has a particular problem among women, only 13 percent of whom see his party as close to their concerns; 79 percent of the public believe the Tories are close to the concerns of the rich. And his party, naturally, is beginning to grow restless. That is how Cameron came, two weeks ago, to be the target of the largest intraparty rebellion against the EU in British history.

In the early 1990s, when Tory prime minister John Major brought his party behind the Maastricht Treaty, which consolidated power in Brussels, there were a few dozen Euroskeptic "Maastricht rebels" who took their case to the country and did great damage to Major's standing. Major's intimates called them "the bastards." Some things don't change—the *Spectator*'s political editor James Forsyth reported recently that those around Cameron refer to today's Euroskeptics as "30 to 40 sh—s."

Recent events, however, have shown that there are more than 30 or 40. During the last Labour government, agitators for direct democracy were able to win agreement to an innovation called the "e-petition." Any proposition that could get 100,000 signatures online would be debated on the floor of the House of Commons. It didn't work out as planned. E-petitions were gathered for a reinstatement of capital punishment (which some polls show a majority of Britons favor). Another popular e-petition called for removing Gordon Brown. It wasn't long before Gordon Brown removed the e-petition.

This was a useful club with which to beat Labour for its arrogance.

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-- Lee Bender, *Philadelphia Jewish Voice*

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-- Gerard Casale, Jr., *Shofar Magazine*

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During the campaign, the Tories were almost Ross Perot-like in their embrace of direct democracy. The result has been a number of very lively and open debates launched by the new House backbench business committee. Some weeks ago the Euroskeptic Tory David Nuttall called for a referendum on whether to stay in Europe. Bill Cash, one of the original Maastricht rebels and a savvy Euroskeptic, altered the motion slightly to ask whether Britain would like to renegotiate the terms of its EU membership. (Cash's preference is for a free-trade zone.) At that point it became a dangerous question, one with the possibility of winning a majority in the party. Cameron decided to enforce a "three-line whip"—a tool for party discipline that means any minister or minister's secretary who votes against the measure must resign. The House of Commons resembles a Latin American army, in that more than 100 members out of a total 650 hold such "leadership" positions. So a three-line whip can kill almost any bill. Of course, a three-line whip has little to do with direct democracy.

Despite the whip, when the votes were tallied, 81 Tories had defied the leadership and 111 members of all parties had called for a renegotiation. Euroskeptic Tory Mark Reckless says that this is a sign that more than half of the party, if the whip were taken off, would vote to pull out of the union. "I'm not certain about that," says Cash. "But there are two-thirds that would vote to renegotiate."

For Tim Montgomerie, who edits the blog *Conservative Home* and has a keen sense of rank-and-file Tory thinking, several factors could be at play. One is that big programs based on abstract questions have lately failed or fallen badly into disrepute—from the Iraq war to stimulus programs to the fight against climate change to (now) the euro. Another is that Euroskeptics have found a way to talk about Europe without invoking abstract questions of sovereignty. But then, events in Europe are making questions of sovereignty look less and less abstract every day. ♦

# Deal or No Deal

All eyes are on the supercommittee.

BY FRED BARNES

The 12 members of the congressional supercommittee aren't isolated and alone, working like monks, as they pursue at least a \$1.2 trillion deficit reduction plan. The six Republicans met at least twice last week with House speaker John Boehner and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell. The week before, three Democrats and three Republicans had dinner at Hunan Dynasty on Capitol Hill, prompting fears among their absent colleagues that a secret deal was being concocted.

The official deadline for the supercommittee is November 23. To meet it, agreement would have to be reached 10 days earlier to give the Congressional Budget Office time to score the plan and the House and Senate 48 hours before voting on it, with no amendments or filibusters allowed.

There appear to be two possible outlines of a plan taking shape, one good, one terrible. To attract the GOP Six, the good plan would be built around tax reform, with either income or corporate tax rates (or both) reduced or frozen, while corporate welfare was scraped from the tax code—loopholes, breaks, and special writeoffs, possibly including those Obama has denounced for corporate jet owners and oil companies. Would any Democrats go along? Senators Max Baucus and John Kerry, maybe. And if Senate majority leader Harry Reid blessed the deal, Patty Murray, his surrogate on the panel, probably would. This is Deal A.

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

Deal B is what might happen should Deal A fall by the wayside. More conventional, it would consist of some formula of tax hikes and spending cuts. Democrats want "balance," a 50-50 split. Conservatives are worried three Republicans on the supercommittee—House members Dave Camp and Fred Upton and Senator Rob Portman—might accept Deal B as a last resort. Not likely, unless Boehner and McConnell anointed the deal.

The biggest impediment to either deal is President Obama. Deal A clashes with his tax-the-rich, anti-Republican strategy, the centerpiece of his reelection campaign. Obama wants the Bush tax cuts to expire at the end of 2012 and a 5.6 percent surtax to be added for millionaires. The top rate would rise from 35 percent to 45 percent.

Republicans believe Obama has become far

less receptive to a deal since he went on his offensive post-Labor Day. An essential part of it is his indictment of congressional Republicans as obstructionists, a do-nothing Congress. Reaching agreement with tax-phobic Republicans on the biggest issues of the day—deficits, spending, taxes—would all but nullify his strategy.

Supercommittee Republicans think their Democratic counterparts are following Obama's lead, for the moment anyway. Their desire for a deal has flagged too.

With no agreement in sight, the way is clear for the Big Three to step in with a plan of their own, privately or publicly. That's Reid, McConnell, and Boehner. They don't agree on much, but all three are eager for a deal.



*Michigan's Fred Upton*

The supercommittee was Reid's idea in the first place, so he has a vested interest in its success.

Also, Reid may understand a bipartisan deal would help Democrats running in 2012 and might preserve a Democratic majority in the Senate with Reid at the helm. It's questionable whether Reid would buck Obama. But a Democratic Senate might be a higher priority for him than keeping Obama in the White House.

For Republicans, Deal A is not only the preferred option but the only viable option. It's the only plan that creates Republican unity on the supercommittee. And it's the pro-growth option. As such, it ought to appeal to most Democrats and Obama, but won't. One Republican insists it can fairly be described as cutting taxes, even if rates aren't lowered. How so? By allowing the Bush tax cuts to become permanent rather than be phased out automatically next year, thus raising income tax rates.

Some conservatives would balk

at Deal A, arguing its elimination of loopholes and breaks would be tax increases. Haven't Republicans promised not to approve tax increases? Yes, but there's a distinction worth noting here. Republicans wouldn't be agreeing to tax *rate* increases. Rate increases are economically harmful. Getting rid of loopholes and special breaks usually isn't.

There's another factor in considering Deal A. It would deprive Camp, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, of the opportunity to take up tax reform themselves, with all the fanfare of hearings, markups, and closely watched negotiations. They might balk at surrendering their role in tax reform to the supercommittee.

The next best outcome to Deal A is zilch—no agreement. This means Republicans offer some version of Deal A to Democrats, who reflexively reject it. Republicans would argue they'd sought a bipartisan deal and the

Democrats were at fault for spurning it.

There's a wrinkle. No deal would trigger a sequester, forcing automatic spending cuts, half from defense, half from domestic programs. Would Congress really let these cuts go into effect? Certainly pro-defense Republicans would try to undo the military cuts. And liberal Democrats would seek to limit domestic cuts.

The worst option is almost any configuration of Deal B. It would cause an angry division among Republicans. And it would put them on Obama's side as we head into a presidential election year. Its tax increases would presumably include rate hikes, and it would be economically counterproductive, a double whammy.

There's bound to be a negative reaction to no deal, whether or not mandatory cuts occur. The credit rating of U.S. debt might be further downgraded. Obama, Democrats, and the media would blame Republicans. That's business as usual, and it leaves the debt mess unresolved. ♦

## With 'Solutions' Like These, Who Needs Problems?

**By Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

For years, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has fought a provision that would give the IRS sweeping authority to hold hostage 3% of nearly every business transaction that takes place between the public and private sectors. The 3% withholding tax effectively grants the federal government an interest-free loan. Worse still, the costs and burdens of the provision far outweigh any benefits.

Yet lawmakers have repeatedly passed up opportunities to repeal this job-killing mandate. With unemployment stubbornly hovering around 9%, and this provision set to take effect in 2013, Washington needs to wipe the 3% withholding tax off the books once and for all. Fortunately, lawmakers may finally be on the verge of doing just that.

Why? Much like we saw with the recently repealed 1099 reporting provision, the withholding tax would bring unintended

consequences. It would saddle honest businesses, doctors, farmers, and colleges and universities with hefty costs, and it would drive up federal, state, and local budgets at a time our nation can ill-afford it.

If the 3% withholding is implemented, public schools may not be able to afford the new buses they need. Cash-strapped colleges and universities may need to raise tuition. Building and repairing our roads and infrastructure—something nearly everyone agrees we need to do—would become even more expensive. Doctors and hospitals already frustrated with Medicare reimbursements would find it increasingly difficult to afford treating seniors.

Failure to repeal the provision will hit small businesses the hardest, taking valuable money from their local economies and sending it to Washington. Many of them operate with a profit margin under 3%, and their cash flow could be compromised. And funds that could be used for investment, operations, and job creation would be diverted to the government's coffers.

The irony is that the cost to implement the withholding tax exceeds the amount of revenue it is expected to generate. So the federal government would need to cut spending, raise taxes, grow the deficit, or do all three to accommodate the provision. And borrowing money to impose a tax on small businesses that would result in the loss of American jobs is just plain dumb.

With "solutions" like these, who needs problems?

With a coalition of 160 organizations behind us, the Chamber has pushed for action. The House recently passed repeal legislation 405-16. The White House supports repealing the provision. Now, the Senate must act. Fully repealing the 3% withholding tax would bring certainty to small businesses and to workers—and not a moment too soon.



**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**  
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# The UNESCO Follies Are Back

The Obama administration bungles the Palestinians' membership vote. **BY JOHN R. BOLTON**



Palestinian foreign minister Riyad al-Malki and ambassador to UNESCO Elias Sanbar

The Palestinian Authority succeeded last Monday in becoming a member state in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The vote was 107 in favor, 14 opposed, and 52 abstaining, with France, Spain, Austria, and India among those supporting PA admission. Two of our closest allies, the United Kingdom and Japan, abstained. Because of a 1990 federal law, supplemented in 1994, the State Department announced a few hours after the vote that the United States was ceasing its contribution to UNESCO.

The applicable statute, proposed in 1989 by Senator Bob Kasten, was a corollary to President George H.W. Bush's efforts to prevent the Palestine

Liberation Organization (predecessor of the PA) from joining U.N. agencies including the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO. Back then, the PLO was trying to create "facts on the ground" in the Middle East peace process by working the U.N.'s corridors. Because only states are eligible for membership in the U.N. system, becoming a member of U.N. bodies, in the PLO/PA's idiosyncratic view, would prove it was a state and therefore equivalent to Israel.

Europeans in particular were reluctant to oppose the PLO. In part, they dismissed as *pro forma* the Bush administration's warnings that Congress would retaliate financially if the PLO joined WHO; they assumed this stance was purely for domestic consumption, to appease "the Jewish lobby," which Europeans believed in even before professors Walt and Mearsheimer unearthed it.

Those of us in the administration

working to block the PLO realized we needed to take much stronger steps. Accordingly, Secretary of State James Baker issued a statement that he would recommend to the president eliminating all U.S. contributions, assessed or voluntary, to any U.N. organization that granted the PLO full membership or changed its observer-state status. Everyone understood that Bush 41 would accept Baker's suggestion.

The effect was dramatic. PLO membership was defeated in May 1989 during a boisterous WHO meeting in Geneva that saw Libyans, Cubans, and Nicaraguan Sandinistas stand on their chairs denouncing American imperialism. Immediately afterwards, I flew from Geneva to Paris to meet with UNESCO's executive board. Ever since Ronald Reagan withdrew the United States from UNESCO in 1984 (along with Thatcher's Britain and Singapore), U.S. contributions to UNESCO had been minimal, so defunding was irrelevant. Instead, I delivered an equally stark message: You can have us or the PLO. The United States will never rejoin if the PLO is admitted. Different words, same music, same effect.

Some people might call this the exercise of smart power. Twenty-plus years later, however, confronted with a resurrected Palestinian U.N. membership campaign, Team Obama stumbled badly. Initially, there was even speculation, since denied, that the president might not order a Security Council veto of a PA application to the United Nations. (Applications to U.N. agencies are decided individually by their respective governing bodies.)

In the context of the financial crises since 2008, there are often calls for governments to use a "big bazooka," a really dramatic step to signal their willingness to take strong measures and thereby reassure global markets. Obama's hesitancy, embarrassment, and unwillingness to fire up a big-bazooka defunding threat undoubtedly contributed to last week's UNESCO defeat. Without question, the PA sensed this weakness and exploited it. Comments by State Department officials before and after the vote betrayed

John R. Bolton is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. He served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 2005-06.

their displeasure with the statute, in effect blaming Congress for making them do something they didn't really want to do. Had they enthusiastically endorsed turning off the U.S. spigot to UNESCO, they would likely have succeeded, as the Bush administration did in 1989.

The difference between Obama and Bush 41 is that Bush understood America had higher priorities than funding U.N. agencies. He and Baker were not afraid to order, over the usual cries of doom and gloom, strong diplomacy to achieve our objectives. And their muscular strategy prevailed. U.S. Middle East policy was not derailed by politically incontinent Palestinian leadership, and the U.N. system was not deprived of any funding. Under Obama, the opposite is happening on both counts.

George W. Bush decided to rejoin UNESCO in 2003 under the mistaken impression he could thereby stem criticism of his administration's

unilateralism. Predictably, however, the "international community" pocketed the U.S. return while continuing its unrelentingly hostile appraisal of Bush and his policies. For the privilege of continuing to be abused, Washington resumed payment of its assessed share of UNESCO's annual budget; the U.S. share reached approximately \$80,000,000 this fiscal year.

The State Department's prompt announcement last week that it was cutting off funding to UNESCO was its savviest action in this affair to date. State thus followed the Bush 41 administration's Plan B, namely, to cauterize the wound within the U.N. system caused by the PA's victory. Our theory in 1989 was that, even had we failed to stop the PLO from joining WHO, the traumatic prospect of a systemwide funding cutoff would bring the rest of the U.N. entities to their senses, minimizing the damage.

We will now see whether the Obama administration, having failed

to implement Plan A effectively, can handle Plan B. Every indication is that the PA will continue its membership campaign throughout the U.N. system; precedent is a powerful tool in U.N. circles, and the Palestinians will fully exploit it. Perhaps they hope to run the table in as many U.N. agencies as possible before their application for membership in the U.N. itself comes back before the Security Council in a few months, thus pressuring Obama not to use his veto.

One thing is certain after the administration cutoff of UNESCO funding: We are at least \$80,000,000 closer to solving this year's federal deficit problem. In fact, the entire episode provides strong arguments for moving toward voluntary funding, rather than assessed or mandatory contributions, across the entire U.N. system. Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen has introduced legislation, recently reported to the House floor, to do just that. Her timing couldn't be better. ♦

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# Life in Libya

So far: less poor, less nasty, and less brutish than under Qaddafi. **BY ANN MARLOWE**



*In Sirte, a list of people who should come forward to reclaim property lost during the war*

**Tripoli** Life in post-revolutionary Libya is not quite normal yet—and Libyans are just beginning to work out what that new normal is going to look like. Shops are mainly open and well stocked, though most carry the sort of low-quality goods more common in places like Afghanistan and Mali than a rich oil state like Libya.

Then again, the country's finances are shaky right now. A number of banks have shut down, and those still open have set a limit on how much people are allowed to withdraw—which amounts to 750 dinars (a little more than \$600) every two weeks. Given these restrictions, people are understandably afraid to deposit their cash in banks, a caution that exacerbates the currency shortage. The National Transitional Council's plans to redesign the currency—without

Qaddafi's face—also make people nervous about holding onto the notes currently in circulation, especially the large denominations that Qaddafi printed when he needed cash in recent years.

Libya is not only newly on the path to democracy, but also just 60 years removed from desperate poverty and illiteracy. There's a rocky road ahead, even if Libya is able to develop into a viable democracy. And the signs so far are mixed.

For instance, the transitional city councils created by local neighborhood committees are highly undemocratic in one key respect: They have no women. There isn't one woman on the councils in Sabratha, Tripoli, or Zuwarah, which between them have about 2 million citizens. Amal Bugaighis, a prominent female lawyer in Benghazi, says the same is true in that city of 800,000. The odds are that, even when the local transitional councils are phased out, women will still

*Ann Marlowe is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute and blogs for World Affairs.*

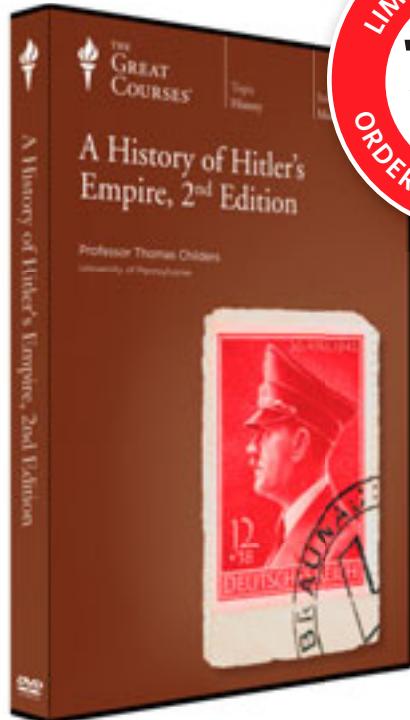
be underrepresented when elections for the four-year city council jobs are held in eight months. There are just two or three women on the National Transitional Council itself.

Another issue is the role of Islam in the future Libyan constitution. The population is almost entirely Muslim, and when National Transitional Council head Mustafa Abdel-Jalil announced October 23 that Libyan laws must be in accord with the Koran, he expressed a popular, though not entirely universal, opinion. And yet the fact is that even self-described liberals sound a lot like the Salafists and Muslim Brotherhood. For example, Essa Ali, a member of the relatively liberal Association for Democracy and Equality, says that what is in the Quran is “an order from God.” Still, he is at pains to distinguish his party from the religious fundamentalists.

Libya is a web of loosely, and eccentrically, connected city-states that reflects tribal alliances and rivalries. For instance, Tripoli is a commercial city that was nourished by the Qaddafi regime, while Benghazi, hated by Qaddafi, was starved of government spending. It's hardly surprising that Benghazi is now exultant in the wake of Qaddafi's downfall and death and Tripoli less so.

There are other winners and also-rans in the post-Qaddafi order. In Berber regions like Zuwarah in western Libya, the revolution won locals the freedom to express their indigenous culture. In the revolution, fighters from Misurata and Zintan paid dearly. (The latter, a town of perhaps 60,000, may have lost more than 200 men.) And now these cities seem to be trying to parlay their losses into political power. The rebels from Zintan refuse to withdraw from Tripoli, and are confiscating, or stealing, goods and property.

Accordingly, Libya's biggest worry is the omnipresent bands of young men with assault rifles and truck-mounted antiaircraft guns. In Sabratha, for example, locals in the quiet, conservative town of 100,000 worry because the three different



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brigades of revolutionaries based there answer to different commanders. Disarming these revolutionaries in order to avert civil conflict is a big concern for every Libyan who isn't one of them. One Libyan diplomat says he's worried that the country might not even get to the point of holding elections before violence erupts.

The country's emerging security establishment recognizes the urgency of the situation. Mustafa al-Sagezli, Libya's deputy interior minister and the deputy commander of the 17 of February brigade, has a \$10 billion plan for getting the weapons and fighters off the streets. First, says the American-educated computer entrepreneur, Libya has to register all those who fought for the revolution, which he figures is about 100,000 men. There will be opportunities for about 20,000 men to join new internal security forces and another 20,000 to

patrol the borders and secure the oil fields. Others will join the national army, which, says Sagezli, has to be rebuilt "on a professional basis."

**Disarming the revolutionaries in order to avert civil conflict is a big concern for every Libyan who isn't one of them. A diplomat worries that the country might erupt in violence before elections can be held.**

Qaddafi gutted the Libyan armed forces for years while he created parallel brigades reporting to him or his inner circle that were better equipped and paid than the army.

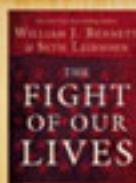
Of the other revolutionaries, some will go back to the jobs they had

before. The many who had marginal or no employment will be offered business opportunities, the chance to continue their studies, including at technical schools abroad, and subsidies for housing and marriage. This integration and rehabilitation plan is costly, much more than the estimated \$2 billion that Washington chipped into the NATO effort. Meanwhile, \$150 billion in regime assets remains frozen, including most of \$37 billion frozen by the United States.

"There is a big role for our foreign friends to help Libya control the weapons," says Colonel Bashir al-Madhouni, a former tank commander in the Libyan Army who defected to the rebels. Of course, most Libyans, and many foreigners, would say that if a reasonable democracy results, the cost will be repaid a hundredfold by the benefit of Libya's example to the Muslim world. ♦

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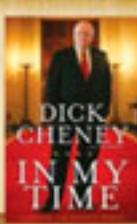
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# They Can Do It

*Our troops can win in Afghanistan.  
But the key battleground is in Washington.*

BY MAX BOOT

*Kabul*

**I**n any war there is often a disconnect between on-the-ground reality and perceptions back home. But rarely has there been such a yawning chasm as with Afghanistan today.

Back home, the general feeling is that the war effort is either failing or idling in neutral. A casual newsreader may note the recent suicide bombing of an armored NATO bus in Kabul, a terrorist assault on the U.S. embassy in September, high-profile assassinations (including that of former president Burhanuddin Rabbani), some of President Karzai's disparaging comments about the United States—and not much else. In Washington all the talk is about how quickly we can withdraw—not about how to achieve "victory," a word that has been conspicuously missing during much of the public debate over this 10-year-old conflict.

And on the ground? A seven-day visit to Afghanistan in late October, taken along with other security analysts at the invitation of General John Allen, the senior American and NATO commander, reveals that U.S. troops are fighting with whole-hearted dedication—and, at least in the south, enjoying considerable success. If the United States is indeed on the way out in Afghanistan, as the political class in Washington now assumes (perhaps rightly), nobody has bothered to inform the troops. They are still risking their necks every day in order to defeat the enemy.

*Max Boot is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and the Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is completing a history of guerrilla warfare and terrorism.*

**I**n Zhari District, west of Kandahar City, troops from the 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division are in the process of clearing this longtime Taliban stronghold. I drove in a convoy of heavily armored MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles from Forward Operating Base Pasab down roads that only a few months ago were full of buried IEDs, past fields that once sheltered Taliban fighters. The American infantrymen have been using M9 armored bulldozers and Mine Clearing Line Charges (known as "mick licks," after their acronym) to blast their way through the Taliban's minefields.

Regular air assaults by helicopters are also taking place to leapfrog Taliban fortifications: As our troops and their Afghan partners advance, they erect their own forts and link them together with newly dug roads that are protected by blast walls to impede Taliban movements. The youthful-looking brigade commander, Colonel Patrick Frank, proudly showed us some of the spoils of war—we got to walk through what



*Marines from the 1st Battalion, 6th Regiment, fighting door-to-door.*

is said to be Mullah Omar's hometown and even to see his former mosque. Another sign of progress: There are now 14 schools open in Zhari and neighboring Maiwand District, up from only 2 last year.

Just before our arrival, the brigade had finally managed to reach the Arghandab River, which marks the southern boundary of Zhari. "This is a big deal," Lieutenant Colonel Kenny Mintz, commander of the 1-32 battalion, told me, noting that this achievement had cost him 13 men killed and 29 seriously injured during the past five months. Just before departing Zhari, I witnessed a moving ceremony in which three of Mintz's men received medals of valor for their extraordinary heroism—including one soldier who had been badly wounded and evacuated

stateside for treatment but had volunteered to return to the fight. "You're my hero," Mintz told him.

Not far away in Helmand Province—which, like Kandahar, has been a focus of the American-led offensive since 2010—U.S. Marines are making similarly impressive progress. Having been at their operations longer, the Marines are farther along: In most of the province they are moving from the "clear" to the "hold and build" phase. Among the districts in the process of being turned over to the Afghan security forces is Marjah, a notorious Taliban stronghold that was first entered by the Marines in February 2010. That much-publicized offensive did not meet initial expectations, leading many to conclude that the whole war effort was doomed. But, while taking a bit longer than expected, the pacification of Marjah has largely been completed.

One Marine battalion has already left Marjah. Now, Lieutenant Colonel Dan Schmitt, commander of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, told us that his Marines are moving out of central Marjah. They are turning over the population center to the Afghan police and army while they deploy to the surrounding desert to pursue the remaining insurgents who have been pushed out of town. Those insurgents who have elected to stay in town have given up the fight and decided to cooperate with the new strongmen of the area—the Marines.

Schmitt took us to lunch at the home of one influential Marjah elder where we were joined by another elder who, Schmitt explained, used to be his counterpart on the other side. Having lost two sons battling the Marines, this senior Taliban figure (whom Schmitt compared to Tony Soprano) decided that it was in his interest to make peace—precisely the sort of calculation that so many insurgents made in Iraq's Anbar Province after butting heads with the Marines for years. The result of such opportunistic changes of allegiance is that Marjah's markets, once shuttered, are now open and bustling, as I discovered during a walk through one of them. The Marines, who once had more firefights than they could handle, now go long stretches without any "contact" from insurgents in central Marjah.

**T**hese are vignettes, admittedly, but they are hardly anomalous. The success in Marjah has been replicated in other Helmand districts such as Garmisir and Nawa. Sangin, in northern Helmand, isn't as far

along because it was entered more recently, but it is on the same trajectory. In Kandahar, Arghandab District has also been pacified, while violence has not risen in Kandahar City despite a string of assassinations which claimed both the well-regarded police chief, Brigadier General Khan Mohammed Mujahid, and the notoriously corrupt chairman of the provincial council (and half-brother of President Karzai), Ahmed Wali Karzai.

Meanwhile "black" Special Operations task forces are conducting multiple operations every night to capture or kill insurgent leaders; more often than not they get their man without a shot being fired. Other, less covert Special Forces detachments are working to set up Afghan Local Police units, essentially armed neighborhood watch organizations that can defend their own villages from the Taliban even in areas where there are not many coalition troops. (We visited one such site in Wardak Province south of Kabul.) The Taliban are paying a backhanded compliment to such programs by targeting their leaders for elimination.

Their campaign of assassination has not, however, stopped the growth of the local police. American intelligence analysts say the Taliban are increasingly weary of the struggle and frustrated by their inability to retake their safe havens in the south, and that there is bickering between the hard-pressed fighters in the field and their leaders safely ensconced in Pakistan. "The enemy is under unprecedented pressure," one intelligence officer told us.

The tangible result of that pressure is a drop of 26 percent in enemy-initiated attacks from July to September 2011 compared with the same period in 2010. U.S. commanders had predicted an *increase* in enemy attacks during this period when the number of U.S. troops surged and they moved into enemy redoubts. But the insurgent response has been much weaker than expected, notwithstanding a few high-profile attacks. The north and west, where some analysts had been worried about an increase in Taliban activity, have also turned more peaceful this year. The one anomaly is Regional Command-East, along the border with Pakistan, where attacks are up between 2010 and 2011.

Before he stepped down as senior NATO commander this summer, General David Petraeus had been planning

to pivot the focus of his operations from the south to the east in 2012 so as to do to the Haqqani network what U.S. troops have already done to the Quetta Shura Taliban. But President Obama's surge drawdown (pulling 10,000 troops out this year, and another 22,000 by the end of September 2012, against the advice of his military commanders) has put that plan into jeopardy. Marine General John Allen, Petraeus's successor, will be hard-pressed to find enough forces to hold the south while mounting a major operation in the east.

To have any chance of success, in my view, Allen must have at least 68,000 troops through the end of the 2013 summer fighting season (down from 100,000 today). That would enable him to consolidate gains in the south, expand the security "bubble" around Kabul so as to connect the capital with Kandahar, and continue to disrupt Haqqani operations in the east, while also completing the buildup of the Afghan National Security Forces. The latter have grown from just 187,000 personnel in 2009 to 306,000 today, and they are supposed to reach a peak strength of 352,000 by the end of 2012. From all that I heard, the Afghan Army is performing credibly; it is the institution that Afghans tell pollsters they esteem the most, and it is fighting hard. But it still needs a lot of support from the coalition, especially in logistics, intelligence and surveillance, fire support, route-clearance vehicles, and medevac helicopters. The police lag behind but are also slowly improving. Their continued improvement is predicated on the presence of coalition mentors, which will be hard to pull off if U.S. troop numbers are reduced too fast.

"A further drop beyond 68,000 would be catastrophic," one U.S. official told me—but it could well happen. In May 2012 President Obama is hosting a NATO summit in his hometown, Chicago. He could well use that occasion to announce further pullouts ahead of the November U.S. presidential election. Already the press is reporting that the White House may switch U.S. forces to a primarily advisory mission in 2012, two years sooner than planned.



*A shootout with Taliban fighters in Marjah District, May 2010*

Weariness on the home front is the most prominent danger facing the U.S.-led campaign in Afghanistan, but it is hardly the only one. There is also the danger posed by sanctuaries in Pakistan—indeed by Pakistan's active support for groups such as the Taliban and the Haqqani network. While most insurgents in Afghanistan are locals, many of their weapons come from Pakistan, including the deadly fertilizer-based IEDs that are still the biggest killers of U.S. troops. And most of their training camps and leaders are safely tucked away in Pakistan. Iran is also providing some support to the Taliban but not on the scale of Pakistan.

Just before his retirement as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen blew the whistle

on the nefarious links between the Haqqani network and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI), but no one has figured out how to get the Pakistanis to back off. Pakistan's generals see the Taliban and Haqqanis as instruments of their foreign policy, and they want their proxies in control across the border. The alternative, they fear, is an Afghanistan dominated by India—an absurd fear but one

stoked by Karzai's recently concluded strategic partnership with New Delhi. The United States has tried both aiding and pressuring Islamabad. Nothing has worked.

The most effective American tool in Pakistan has been drone strikes, but these were primarily limited to al Qaeda targets. That changed on October 13 when a U.S. drone took out Janbaz Zadran, a senior Haqqani leader, near Miram Shah, a town in North Waziristan that has been the Haqqanis' longtime headquarters. The strike shattered the Haqqanis' assumption of invulnerability. More such strikes could further damage their organization—especially if the CIA manages to kill the group's founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and his son, Sirajuddin, now its operational chief.

The Taliban too could be vulnerable to cross-border raids although their headquarters—in Quetta—is deeper into Pakistan and strikes there would spark more of a backlash from the Pakistanis, who can always threaten to close an important NATO supply route running from the port of Karachi. But the town of Chaman, the main border

crossing point on the road to Kandahar, is another hotbed of insurgent activity that coalition forces might be able to strike without as many repercussions in Pakistan. ISI generals would also be vulnerable to sanctions that target their bank accounts and impede their ability—and that of their offspring—to travel in the West. But so far there is little consensus in Washington on such steps. The administration has not even formally designated the Haqqani network as a terrorist organization, perhaps in a misguided attempt to facilitate talks with the group. In fact, talks are doubtful given the virulence of the Haqqanis, but if they did come about, the possibility of lifting a terrorist designation could be an incentive to reach an agreement.

Yet another major obstacle to a successful outcome in Afghanistan is the pervasive corruption that drives Pashtun villagers into the arms of the Taliban. Hamid Karzai sits atop a complex web of patronage networks that rip off billions of dollars in international aid, connive in the drug trade, timber smuggling, and other rackets, steal land, and extort payoffs from ordinary citizens who need anything from the government. No one expects that Afghanistan will be as honestly run as Switzerland anytime in this millennium, but current levels of corruption are well beyond local norms, and they threaten the long-term stability of the country.

The U.S. response has been limited and belated. It was only in the summer of 2010 that General Petraeus set up a unit—Combined Joint Interagency Task Force Shafafiyat (“openness” in Dari)—to track the coalition’s own spending and try to prevent too much of it from winding up in the wrong pockets. Under the dynamic leadership of Brigadier General H.R. McMaster, one of the Army’s premier soldier-scholars, Shafafiyat has scored some notable successes—such as cleaning up outrageous levels of fraud at the main military hospital in Kabul and barring a number of corrupt companies from bidding for coalition trucking contracts. But much more needs to be done. Reducing corruption is a long-term undertaking, and there is a distinct sense in Kabul that time is running out for the coalition mission.

**O**riginally the end of 2014 had been designated by the NATO Lisbon summit in November 2010 as the time when “Afghan forces will be assuming full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan.” But the summit declaration also said: “Transition will be conditions-based, not calendar-driven, and will not equate to withdrawal of [coalition] troops.” Now, however, most nations, including the United States, appear to be bent on pulling out almost all of their troops by the end of 2014. If the United States were to draw down to fewer than 10,000 troops by 2015, and if there is no miraculous

change for the better on the ground, there is a real risk that the Afghan government and security forces could collapse, setting off a civil war of the kind that devastated the country in the 1990s. That war, recall, was triggered by the end of Soviet aid to the Najibullah regime. “Everyone is scared here,” Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak told us. “We worry the United States and the rest of the international community will leave us as they left us after the Soviet Union was defeated.”

To avoid such a dire outcome, the United States will need to make a long-term commitment—something that the Karzai government, for all the difficulties it causes us, is eager to see. Negotiations are now in full swing on a Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States and Afghanistan. Two issues are holding up the conclusion of talks—Karzai’s desire to end coalition detention of Afghans and nighttime Special Operations raids—but the general expectation on both sides in Kabul is that these are not deal-breakers. A signed treaty should be an important endorsement of the stability and longevity of the Afghan government. But much will still depend on two decisions, one to be made in Afghanistan, the other in the United States.

The first decision concerns Afghanistan’s post-2014 leadership. Karzai’s second term of office expires that year, and he has made it clear that he will not seek to amend the constitution to serve another term. Since Afghanistan has no real political parties, that leaves a free-for-all succession battle in which the United States, if it chooses to do so, can play an important role by trying to anoint a relatively honest and effective leader who could do a better job than Karzai has done.

The second decision, to be made in Washington, is even more important: How rapidly will we draw down and what “steady state” troop level will we seek after 2014? Last year retired Lieutenant General David Barno, a former U.S. commander in Afghanistan (who traveled there with me in October), and Andrew Exum, a former Army ranger who, like Barno, is now in residence at the Center for New American Security, issued a report suggesting that Afghanistan would need a sustainable presence of 25,000-35,000 troops focused on supporting the Afghan security forces. But given President Obama’s complete withdrawal from Iraq, that may be more than he will support.

As is so often the case with wars waged by a democratic nation, the really decisive terrain is not on a faraway battlefield but in the halls of power back home. I am confident that the troops in Afghanistan can get the job done if their commanders receive the resources they need. Given the war weariness plaguing the American political class, I am less confident that those resources will be forthcoming. ♦

# Dogs and Cats Living Together

*A Tea Party-Occupy Wall Street agenda*

BY PETER J. HANSEN

**W**hat if the two prominent grassroots movements of the day, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, joined forces to support an agenda that would be good for America?

Both groups are short on policy specifics. As popular movements, they lack organizers and spokesmen; both are to some extent expressions of mood. Nonetheless, there are several policies that reflect the concerns of at least a large part of both groups and that would be beneficial for the ordinary Americans whom both claim to represent. These policies would be a departure, however, from the current positions of the Democratic and Republican parties—whose shortcomings caused the two movements to spring up in the first place. So here it is, the Tea Party-Occupy Wall Street agenda.

## PREVENT BANK BAILOUTS

**B**oth Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party are disturbed by the way the federal government handled the financial crisis of 2008. The problem is not that people on Wall Street make a lot of money (though some in Occupy Wall Street might think it is). The problem is that when they lose money, at least when they lose a lot, the rest of us have to bail them out.

In addition to being unfair and heightening income inequality, this arrangement corrupts Wall Street itself. It

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produces an incentive for traders at financial institutions to take foolish risks, in particular to follow strategies that usually yield modest profits but occasionally produce spectacular losses. In other words, this arrangement rewards bad traders and thereby misallocates capital.

The most significant way in which the taxpayer stands behind financial institutions is federal insurance of bank deposits, which began as a response to the massive bank failures of the Great Depression. Federal deposit insurance clearly serves the public interest, but it is not without cost. It commits American taxpayers to support every insured deposit at an American bank. People in the Tea Party are rightly suspicious of government regulation, but where the federal government puts taxpayers on the line, it should exercise strict oversight.

The Dodd-Frank financial legislation passed in 2010 includes the so-called “Volcker rule,” named for proponent Paul Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve. The Volcker rule is a step in the right direction, but it doesn’t go far enough. It forbids banks from trading for themselves, but it allows them to engage in what is called “market-making”—offering prices at which one is ready to buy and sell a particular instrument, such as a foreign currency or a stock. Doing so involves taking short-term positions—buying or selling until one can offset the transaction—and market-makers often also take longer-term positions, based on their sense of where the market is going.

The distinction between trading and market-making will be difficult if not impossible to enforce in practice. Even if it could be enforced, market-making itself is a risky activity which should not be underwritten by insured bank deposits. We should go further and reinstate the division between commercial and investment banking that existed until the partial repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act in 1999.



*A Tea Party gathering in Orlando, April 2009*

(There is also much we don't need in Dodd-Frank, notably the establishment of an Office of Fair Lending and Equal Opportunity, which may help ensure that the recent financial crisis is not our last.)

Any financial institution that accepts FDIC-insured deposits should be deemed a commercial bank. Commercial banks should not be permitted to engage in investment activities other than lending to borrowers and purchasing U.S. debt instruments. They should be permitted to buy only U.S. debt instruments, not those of Italy or California or Fannie Mae or any private corporation, and certainly not stocks, options, futures, currencies, mortgage-backed securities, swaps, and so on. The United States is the entity issuing the guarantee—and holding the bag if troubles arise. It should not be compelled to guarantee anybody else's creditworthiness.

In a word, commercial banking should be boring. Other financial firms—investment banks, private equity firms, hedge funds, venture capitalists—can take big risks and reap big rewards. When things go awry, as they will from time to time, the taxpayer should not have to pay. The government should ensure that no firm is in a position to cause a financial crisis which might require a taxpayer bailout. And that will be easier to do if we reinstate the division between commercial and investment banking. Panics will occur from time to time, but for the most part they won't affect regular banks or endanger insured deposits, so the damage will be limited.

The chief argument against strict regulation of commercial banking is that it limits American banks as they compete with other entities, including foreign banks. This argument is weaker than it might seem. Insured banking is dominated by government involvement; the taxpayer underwrites whatever occurs. When banks are allowed to use taxpayer-insured money for risky activities, they tend to make a lot of money when times are good, largely for their own highly paid trading desks, and to lose a lot of money when times are bad. It is not clear why taxpayers should underwrite such activity.

The brief and inglorious era of lightly regulated insured banking began with the partial repeal of Glass-Steagall. This was preceded by a highly publicized though not-yet-legal merger between Citicorp, a very large bank, and the Travelers Group, a very large insurance company, resulting in the formation of Citigroup. Ten years later, Citigroup was effectively bankrupt and needed a huge infusion of taxpayer money to meet its obligations. This

is a useful example of what we stand to lose with strict regulation of commercial banking.

## ELIMINATE CORPORATE WELFARE

**D**espite differences of emphasis, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street share a well-founded suspicion that the federal government favors politically connected interests at the expense of the rest of us. Corporate welfare is one way this happens, and it should be understood broadly. Farm subsidies are one form of corporate welfare; they redistribute money from other Americans to a select group of large corporations and mostly wealthy individuals. The massive subsidies and loan guarantees given to putatively “green” corporations are another form, though they generally benefit less successful corporations. The recent scandal surrounding Solyndra illustrates how political connections rather than viability in the marketplace determine who receives corporate welfare, and how it tends to produce “heads I win, tails you lose” situations. If Solyndra had been successful, its well-connected owners would have made a fortune; when it wasn't, the taxpayers lost one.

The proper policy is simply to eliminate corporate welfare. Unlike federal insurance of bank deposits, corporate welfare does not benefit us. Its elimination will both lower our taxes and strengthen our economy. The market is infinitely better at allocating capital than the federal government; and when things go wrong, as they often do, the investors who hoped to profit are the ones who should lose, not the taxpayers.

## SUPPORT AMERICAN WORKERS

**S**upporting the wages of American workers with a tariff is not quite a respectable position among our political elites, which is why it is valuable to hear other voices, like those of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street.

Free trade brings America many benefits, but it also puts downward pressure on wages, especially for unskilled workers. (We do not have completely free trade, but our current average trade-weighted tariff is only 2 percent.) The impact of foreign trade on domestic wages, moreover, has grown substantially in recent decades, largely because we have so much more trade with countries whose workers are paid much less than ours. Our top three trading partners in 1975



*A Tea Party rally at the U.S. Capitol*

were Canada, Japan, and Germany. They are now Canada, China, and Mexico. China has actually surpassed Canada as the top exporter to the United States, though if we consider both imports and exports, Canada is still our largest trading partner. (Our trade with Canada is much more balanced than our trade with China, and so is our trade with Mexico.)

Josh Bivens of the Economic Policy Institute estimates that foreign trade currently decreases wages for unskilled labor in the United States by 4 percent. Bivens also estimates that foreign trade raises the wage ratio between skilled and unskilled labor by about 7 percent. In other words, foreign trade increases income inequality by increasing the disadvantage unskilled workers face relative to skilled workers in the United States. (There is debate among economists about Bivens's analysis, but he seems to present the best estimates available.)

Restricting imports in order to support a particular industry imposes a hidden tax on the rest of the country and is akin to corporate welfare. Nonetheless, there are some helpful things the federal government can do. China, which exports about four times as much to the United States as it imports from us, and which has been manipulating its (and our) currency for years in order to sustain this imbalance, is the obvious place to start. There is no need for hostile rhetoric, but if China will not allow its currency to float freely on international markets, we should impose a substantial tariff on Chinese products, aimed at producing something like the ratio of imports to exports we have with the rest of the world, which is roughly 1.5 to one. (In recent months China has allowed its currency to appreciate modestly, but nowhere near the level that would produce this ratio.) The Senate recently passed legislation calling for the Treasury Department to increase tariffs on Chinese goods if it determines that China has been manipulating its currency. This is a rather weak response; nonetheless, the Obama administration considers it excessive. The administration's apparent fear of angering China is pusillanimous. There is little China can do to harm us without doing more harm to itself.

Beyond China, we should consider implementing a modest tariff, in the range of 10 percent, on all imported goods from countries with which we do not have bilateral trade agreements. (We currently have such agreements with 20 countries, including Canada and Mexico. While we run an overall trade deficit with these countries, our trade with them is closer to balance than that with countries with which we have no such agreements, and of course the agreements with these countries bolster friendly relations.) Unlike other forms of taxation, this would increase domestic employment, and thereby decrease dependence on the government. A 10 percent tariff on imported goods would produce additional federal revenue of about \$100 billion annually—which is impressive for a form of taxation that voters

would actually welcome. If we simultaneously increased the tariff on Chinese goods to 25 percent, we would see \$150 billion more in federal revenue than we currently receive.

To be sure, there are arguments against such a policy. Everybody who has taken economics in college has learned that free trade maximizes one's advantage, even if other countries follow a different policy. The advantage thereby maximized, however, is total consumption, not total production. In the long run, consumption and production tend to come into balance, but the long run can be very long indeed, especially when the world's second-largest economy is working to foster an imbalance that favors its exports. In the meantime, damage may be done both to individual citizens and to a nation's work habits and political system.

Some international trade economists have studied the harm free trade causes workers in developed countries at a time of rapid manufacturing growth in less developed countries. This situation will not last forever, but a 10 percent tariff seems a modest and reasonable way to cushion our economy against whatever external shocks the future may hold. This policy would increase employment and add to the take-home pay of less skilled American workers at a time when they are being squeezed by low-wage foreign competition. We'd all pay a little more for a lot of products, but that's a price many people would gladly accept in exchange for some protection of domestic manufacturing jobs.

**T**hese three items—preventing bank bailouts, eliminating corporate welfare, and adopting tariff protection for American workers—constitute an agenda that could win support from both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, as well as many other Americans. It is an agenda that would make our country stronger, fairer, and wealthier. And it suggests a framework within which to approach other issues as well. The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street share a desire to help working Americans in ways that do not foster dependence on big government. One might examine immigration policy in this light, since our current high level of immigration puts downward pressure on wages, especially for those who are not highly skilled or educated. Limiting immigration would probably be less welcome to Occupy Wall Street protesters than to Tea Party members, but it would be an effective way of pursuing an objective that Occupy Wall Street supports: improving the lives of American workers. Other issues such as school choice and health care reform might be susceptible to similar thinking.

Our political system sometimes seems to offer a choice between the party of welfare and the party of Wall Street. We can do better. The time is ripe. Political entrepreneurs should look beyond the usual partisan divide, discern the intersection between the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, and seize the moment. ♦



Illustration for 'Clubs,' *The Spectrum*, Spring 1944

# 'The Habit of Art'

*Flannery O'Connor, illustrator*

BY KATHERINE EASTLAND

*Milledgeville, Georgia*

In 1955 Flannery O'Connor wrote to her friend Elizabeth McKee that "the only way to get here"—her home, the antebellum farm Andalusia—"is by bus or buzzard." Yet many came to see her, and many still come. In fact, there's a small sign to let you know where to turn off Highway 441 for Andalusia—it's right across the street from a barbecue place—but the sign is so small you might mistake it for a back or side entrance. Go past the sign, and within a few minutes' drive you'll see O'Connor's red-roofed house set on a slight hill and girded by pecan trees.

For the past eight years Andalusia and its surrounding acres have

been open to the public. In that time, nearly 30,000 visitors have made the pilgrimage to Milledgeville, where old wrought iron signs declare in white letters the town a "bird sanctuary." Here O'Connor grew up and, weakened by bouts of lupus in her late twenties, returned for the last 13 years of her life, and wrote.

Her slender, meticulously wrought corpus, shot through with Gothic sensibility in its depiction of what she famously termed the "Christ-haunted South," has afforded her a high spot in 20th-century American fiction. The popularity of her stories has increased steadily since her death in 1964 at 39, making her a misfit in the mainstream. When the Library of America published her complete works in 1988, the volume outsold William Faulkner's, published three

years prior. And just this past summer Penguin released *A Good Hard Look*, in which novelist Ann Napolitano uses O'Connor doubly as muse and character in a story set in Milledgeville. (The dust jacket features her favorite bird: the peacock.)

Despite the uptick in O'Connorania, there is a portion of her work that remains little explored: her art. Like many writers, from William Blake to her contemporary Elizabeth Bishop, O'Connor understood the double-headed definition of the ancient Greek word *graphos*, which can refer to a mark as a word or as an image. O'Connor did not have pretensions about what was clearly her secondary gift; she painted for pleasure, and because it made her a better observer of her country. To young writers seeking advice, she wrote, "You have got to

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learn to paint with words," and argued that any discipline, be it mathematics or theology—but especially drawing—would help them to see and, ultimately, to judge. For judgment, which is critical to fiction, begins and ends in sight: "Everything has its testing point in the eye," she wrote, "and the eye is an organ that eventually involves the whole personality, and as much of the world as can be got into it."

A phrase O'Connor used in her book of essays and speeches, *Mystery and Manners*, published posthumously in 1969, is "the habit of art," which she culled from the book she "cut her aesthetic teeth" on, *Art and Scholasticism* by Jacques Maritain. By Maritain's phrase (which is not truly his, as its roots extend to Cicero's writing on rhetoric) she does not mean artistic activity—though that, too, has its place—but the quality or disposition of mind that yields such activity:

Writing is something in which the whole personality takes part—the conscious as well as the unconscious mind. Art is the habit of the artist and habits have to be rooted deep in the personality.

O'Connor displayed the beginnings of such a habit early. In high school she fashioned lino-cut cartoons by the dozen. Classmates didn't think of her so much as a budding writer but a quirky, constant cartoonist—the next James Thurber, as one peer put it. She earned that reputation by holding the art editorship of the *Peabody Palladium*, for which she wrought 120 block print cartoons in five years. Then at Georgia State College for Women she made one print per week for the literary magazine, the *Colonnade*, and would at times illustrate her own articles. After her freshman year, the

*Macon Telegraph* ran a profile of her with this headline: "Mary O'Connor Shows Talent as Cartoonist."

She likened thinking up an idea for a cartoon to "catching a rabbit," and then tying it to something current on campus, such as the sudden inundation of WAVES in 1942 (one

reviews—O'Connor tried to convince *Harper's Bazaar* to run her oil self-portrait with a pheasant cock, a pet whom she nicknamed "the Muse" and painted with tiny devil horns sprouting from its head to better complement her "halo" of a straw hat. (*Harper's* wrote back, "Couldn't you send us a snapshot?") She then asked Harcourt, Brace to run the painting on the jacket of *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*. They told her, almost tactfully, "We don't think it would increase the sale of the stories"—and then wrapped the book in ghastly mustard yellow and placed each title word in its own raspberry bubble.

The self-portrait with pheasant cock is the only O'Connor painting that is widely available for reproduction—and then only in a black-and-white version in which O'Connor stands in front of her painted self and tries to make her face match the one she painted. The image is striking but tells nothing of her palette. The one publication to run the painting on its own, in color, is the tiny *Flannery O'Connor Bulletin*, published annually by her all-brick alma mater, now called Georgia College.

The colors are discordant, earthy, ugly: ochre, hunter green, brick, mouse brown. She painted the canvas in thick layers, with nothing to thin or silken the oils.

O'Connor made several paintings at Andalusia and joked that her mother had commissioned her to cover the walls of their home. Her longtime friend Robert Fitzgerald described a few: "A rooster's angry head" glaring from the top of the steps, "simple but beautiful paintings of flowers in bowls, of cows under trees, of the Negro house under the bare trees of winter." Little else of her oil painting is known.



Flannery O'Connor (right) at Georgia State College for Women

of her two references to World War II) or the much-dreaded Physical Fitness Day. In her senior year she drew the endpapers for the annual, the *Spectrum*, depicting a bird's-eye view of students shunting to and from class along angular paths. While studying journalism at the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa, she submitted cartoon after cartoon to the *New Yorker*, which sent her, she wrote, "a lot of encouragin' rejection slips."

Even in 1953 when she was known as a writer—*Wise Blood* having been published the year before, to mixed

What can be seen and studied, however, are the cartoons. They are a few minutes' drive from Andalusia in the special collections of Georgia College. But the curious don't need to make the trek to see the pictures, for the college has published them in a simple coffee-table edition, *The Cartoons of Flannery O'Connor at Georgia College* ([www.gcsu.edu/flannerycartoons](http://www.gcsu.edu/flannerycartoons), \$16.99). Only six of the 150 images have ever been published before (and those only in the college's *Bulletin*). The book's well-chosen cover image hints at the correspondence O'Connor later saw between words and images: a close-up of her signature, the initials MFO'C arranged in the form of a squawking chicken, with the apostrophe as the bird's eye. In January, Fantagraphics will publish *Flannery O'Connor: The Cartoons* (\$22.99).

The young O'Connor pushed her drawn and linoleum-block figures into exaggerated characters and types. There is the boy-crazy bimbo, the bookworm wall-flower who says at a dance, "Oh, well, I can always be a Ph.D.," the lanky schoolgirl beside the stout schoolgirl—and phalanxes of WAVES who look like hulking cylinders whose skirts would clank if they touched. Each figure is distorted under her busy gauge. Out of the blocks she cut Pinocchio noses, eyes popping out of heads like twin tubes (to better see passing hunks), swollen feet under meaty

calves, bodies with Olive Oyl proportions, and so on. And while the cartoons are, for the most part, happy, lighthearted, effervescent—many of them silly inside jokes about assemblies and chapel—they do have this in common with her fiction: They are stark and hard, without shades of gray or shadow or crosshatching. Every

frame is a severe jagged puzzle of black and white.

Like her fiction, the cartoons, with their pulled and twisted figures, are visceral, grotesque, comic. This style jars with the cutesy cartoons about spring break and other holidays—the juxtaposition seems nearly sinister—but works well when the cartoon is

about the characters in her fiction. Viewing her country through the hard lens of Roman Catholic orthodoxy, she recognized sin and could see with searing clarity, and humility, the depravity of man.

The novelist with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural; and he may well be forced to take ever more violent means to get his vision across to this hostile audience.

By violent means, she meant that "you have to make your vision apparent by shock—for the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures." Reading her fiction after looking at her art, you begin to wonder what Haze Motes's preacher's hat, or the "green halos" of a peacock's tail, would look like on her block. The mature writing style and the early cartoon style are of a piece because they come from the same firm personality. But only one style is mature, and the cartoons can't be analyzed to understand her writing.

Violence has a considerable presence in O'Connor's fiction—characters tumble in her peaceful prose into extremes of death and destruction, much as they do in Greek tragedy—but it is not the action that haunts us after reading but the image: a girl's wooden

satirical. In one frame, O'Connor outs the artificial intellectual: One girl student says to another in an art exhibition, "I don't like looking at these old pictures either, but it doesn't hurt my reputation for people to think I'm a lover of fine arts."

These early cartoons bring to mind one of O'Connor's most famous lines

leg, Atlanta as Purgatory, a mummified holy child, Christ lingering in car windows, a pig charging into a river with a peppermint stick in its mouth. Revelation itself comes in the form of an image, too, when it comes: The story "Revelation" closes with a woman who is blind to her own depravity shooting water from a hose



*'I don't enjoy looking at these old pictures either, but it doesn't hurt my reputation for people to think I'm a lover of fine arts.'*

into a sow's eye and then, suddenly, seeing a great procession of souls rising up to heaven in silence. In this moment we are watching a woman watching an event; O'Connor's writing is dominated by sight and suffused in hard, physical images.

Many of these images, in her writing and in her art, O'Connor mined locally. The cartoons depict classmates and teachers, the paintings capture scenes from Andalusia, and the characters in her fiction draw upon what she heard on the local radio station or saw in the streets of Milledgeville or read in weekly livestock journals. Her interest was not in the intricacies of consciousness but in the "objective world outside the mind" of her own small town, she

wrote, because reality does not end at the surface of things but begins there: The "things of the world pour forth from God," and behind surfaces there is potentially everything as opposed to nothing.

Even the objects included as props in her stories—a Bible briefcase, a warthog—accumulate meaning and become symbols that are almost too heavy to exist only in ink. They refuse to be empty or random or anonymous. In *Mystery and Manners* O'Connor quotes Joseph Conrad verbatim, but without quotation marks, as if she had internalized his sentence so much that it had become her own thought. The purpose, she wrote, in writing so intensely is "before all, to make you see." ♦

daughter of the Church" for its long-standing Roman Catholic tradition, was rent asunder in Richelieu's eyes by the Wars of Religion, and by frequent unrest by a nobility unwilling to submit to monarchy. Accordingly, Richelieu's main political aims were "to ruin the Huguenot's party, to humble the high nobility, to bring all the subjects to know their duty, and to raise [the king's] name in all the foreign nations to where it should be." Richelieu sought to promote France's unity as much as its grandeur, and thereby made the nation a prominent power in modern Europe.

From 1618 to 1648, the Thirty Years' War, one of the ugliest conflicts in history, ravaged Western Europe. Blanchard underscores that, whereas Louis XIII faced the world as a warrior, war for Richelieu had to be envisaged in a moral perspective. Richelieu was deeply aware of the misery it brought, and of the canonical teachings on the subject, such as those of Thomas Aquinas, who wrote that war had to be justified. Though far from the orthodoxy of the Habsburgs on religious dogma, Richelieu nonetheless recognized the need for moral justification for war.

"Few statesmen," Henry Kissinger notes in *Diplomacy*, "can claim a greater impact on history. Richelieu was the father of the modern state system." But his enduring impact can be traced in additional spheres and remains evident even today. For Richelieu helped shape the relationship between politics and high culture that would endure in ever more modern forms through today's Fifth Republic, promoting grand public buildings, the theater, and even founding the Académie Française to improve the language. Describing the breadth of Richelieu's legacy, Blanchard makes a convincing case that "Richelieu was to statesmanship what Machiavelli was to political theory, Galileo to science, or Descartes to philosophy."

Blanchard's emphasis on Richelieu's own conception of the religious statesman may be this book's most important contribution. It is simplistic, he argues, to understand Richelieu primarily as



# Cardinal of State

*Richelieu and the invention of modern France.*

BY KENNETH WEINSTEIN

For the past three centuries and a half, Cardinal Richelieu has captivated students of politics.

Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal-Duc de Richelieu et de Fronsac (1585-1642), chief minister to Louis XIII, was, after all, the prime architect of the consolidation of the French monarchy against the nobility, and the individual most responsible for France's rise on the world stage. Jean-Vincent Blanchard, professor of French at Swarthmore, has written an elegant and readable new biography that reveals what a political genius Richelieu really was. Blanchard describes the brutal intrigues that marked the royal court, and how

**Éminence**  
*Cardinal Richelieu and the Rise of France*  
by Jean-Vincent Blanchard  
Walker, 320 pp., \$30

Richelieu went from opponent of Louis XIII to his most trusted adviser, all the while surviving numerous threats to his life to become the most influential man of his age.

Richelieu's personal ambition seemed limitless. He was, as Blanchard notes, "a man who always took care of how his own life and legacy would be perceived by posterity." This by no means precluded the use of force. As Cardinal de Retz, a leader of the antimonarchic Fronde in the generation after Richelieu, put it: Richelieu "struck down humans like lightning rather than governing them." Richelieu's brutality, however, was not aimless: He "show[ed] no mercy toward enemies of the state, and the state's enemies were his own." France, once considered the "eldest

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“the rampart of the Catholic religion and the scourge of heretics.” Indeed, unlike Louis XIV, Richelieu took care never to revoke the Edict of Nantes, which afforded toleration to France’s Protestants. Richelieu’s relationship with the church in France was complicated: The pious were skeptical of the war he helped wage against Catholic Spain and Austria, as well as alliances with Protestant princes in Germany and Switzerland.

Less devout than many of the royal confessors, Richelieu emphasized reason over orthodoxy in a manner that

Richelieu’s rapid rise and lasting achievements are all the more startling given the court climate of rapidly shifting alliances. Richelieu went from opponent to prime adviser to Louis XIII over the period following his appointment as adviser to the king’s mother, the domineering Marie de’Medici. Louis XIII, widely believed to be ill-fitted for the throne, stunned many by ordering the murder of his mother’s favorite adviser, Concino Concini, in 1617, thereby effectively ending Marie’s regency. After the execution, the king called out to Richelieu before the court: “Finally

of Luynes. The wily Richelieu, who acknowledged that “those who fight against a legitimate power have already lost half of the battle,” managed to broker a peace accord that included a provision for Richelieu’s promotion to cardinal as a protection against any reversal of fortune.

In 1622, Richelieu was named cardinal. The Marquis de La Vieuville took over the stuttering royal council but, after mismanagement of the royal finances, asked Louis XIII to call on Richelieu to secure the goodwill of the queen mother. General approval and relief granted Louis’s choice.

Cardinal Richelieu rapidly surprised by his broad mindedness. Unlike more zealous Catholics, he never denounced accords with France’s Huguenots. Louis XIII gained growing respect for Richelieu and realized that the cardinal represented the king’s best hope for success. Following the emergence of the Chalais conspiracy against Richelieu’s life, the king ordered the arrest of his own two half-brothers, the Vendômes, and wrote to Richelieu: “Be assured that I will protect you against everyone.” Until the very end of their lives, Louis never broke this solemn commitment.

Blanchard’s treatment of the frequently troubled, yet ultimately critical, relationship between king and minister is both comprehensive and accessible. Given the richness and complexity of the source material, this is no mean accomplishment. According to Blanchard, “For a large part of France’s population, Richelieu’s death came with relief, because they had come to associate him with public executions and endless wars.” Nevertheless, he quotes this epitaph:

*Ci-gît en ce lieu  
Le Cardinal de Richelieu  
À qui il faudrait un tombeau  
Plus magnifique et plus beau  
Puisque avec son Éminence  
Repose toute la France*

*(Here rests  
Cardinal Richelieu  
Who surely deserves a tomb  
More magnificent and beautiful  
Since with His Eminence  
Rests all of France)* ♦



*Cardinal Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne (ca. 1640)*

would later be heard in the antireligious Enlightenment. Richelieu argued that “the natural light of thought makes it obvious to anyone that man, having been created reasonable, is bound to act using this power. Otherwise, he would act against his own nature and consequently offend his Creator.” Thus, according to Blanchard, “the Cardinal was a pragmatist who thought rational political decisions and ‘natural right’ were reconcilable with God’s design.” This was in marked contrast to the thinking of most other European rulers, including the Hapsburgs, to whom religious orthodoxy and dogma were the foundations of politics.

I am free from your tyranny.” A lesser figure might have fled politics for a safer career in the church, but by negotiating an arrangement whereby the queen mother retreated from Paris in a manner befitting her rank, Richelieu saved his political career.

Following a period of intense turmoil and the resurgent specter of civil war, the queen mother and her son finally met in reconciliation near Tours. But in August 1620, when troops loyal to the queen and the royalists clashed at the Ponts-de-Cé, Richelieu sided with the queen, deceiving both the king and his favorite, Charles d’Albert, Duke

# Oh, By the Way. . .

*I should acknowledge that I'm extraordinary.*

BY JOE QUEENAN

**H**ave you noticed that whenever a newspaper columnist uses the phrase “full disclosure,” it’s primarily for purposes of self-aggrandizement?

In an article that’s supposed to be about an exciting new app for the Droid, or our disastrous policy in Pakistan, the author will slip in a “full disclosure” that is always a back-handed way of saying that his wife just won the Nobel Prize for physics, or that her cousin Ashley singlehandedly put Bernie Madoff in jail, or that the columnist’s brother-in-law once struck out Barry Bonds four times running. In an article that is ostensibly about the death of a famous musician, or the discovery of a new planet, or the announcement of a bold new White House initiative, the journalist will slip in a comment, supposedly for purposes of full disclosure, that informs the reader:

Full disclosure: I once took piano lessons with the deceased. He said I could be the next Chopin. Or at least the next Van Cliburn.

Full disclosure: My wife has already discovered eight planets. *Eight.*

Full disclosure: I went to prep school with Barack Obama and once dunked on him. Actually, twice.

Thus, full disclosure doesn’t mean that the author is taking pains to reveal that his comments may be colored by a friendship. It’s a way of telling the reader: I totally rock. I get to ask the president of the United States really important questions. I get to marry a super-high-powered publi-

cist. Don’t you wish you were as well connected as me? Don’t you? You pathetic loser.

I am not saying that full disclosure statements are inappropriate or extraneous. They insulate journalists from accusations that they are concealing conflicts of interest. They inform the reader, often in breathless prose, that the author and the person he is writing about are close friends and, in some instances, betrothed. Such disclosures are an honest way of telling the reader: *You should not take my comments at face value. I’m kind of connected with the person I’m writing about. Actually, we share the same summer home on Martha’s Vineyard.*

The only problem I have with this approach is that the reporter may disclose one conflict of interest without disclosing another. He may reveal that he is married to a U.S. attorney who is prosecuting the corrupt hedge fund in Columbia, South Carolina, he is disparaging, but not reveal that he hates everybody from the Palmetto State because he once got smacked around by state troopers for giving them lip about a burned-out tail light on I-95 back in 1989. Or in an article about Bill Gates, he may disclose that he does consulting work for Apple on the side, but not reveal that he hates Microsoft because his first PC crashed before he got a chance to save his highest Tetris scores.

Or in an article critical of the French political system, he may inform the reader that he once shared a flat in Geneva with Dominique Strauss-Kahn, but fail to disclose that the philandering Frenchman used to hit on his wife, his sister, his mother, his nanny, his babysitter, his maid, and his Great Aunt Muriel. And his

cousin Wanda. And maybe even his sister-in-law Jacqui. And oh yeah, the Beranger twins down the hall.

Thus, the person making the relevant disclosures may have told the truth, but he has not told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The truth has been varnished. If newspapers had a policy that insisted on true, all-embracing “full disclosure,” we might see a wave of parenthetical aides that read more like this:

“Bryant missed his last three jump shots against the Mavericks. Crucial jump shots. Jump shots the Lakers desperately needed him to make. Perhaps the time has come for Mr. Bryant to think about hanging it up for good. (Full disclosure: I am four-feet-nine, fat, with bad vision, and grew up rooting for the Celtics. I am basically only trashing Kobe because he once called me a Smurf. To be honest, I may not even be four-foot-nine.”

Or:

“Secretary of State Christopher Lewis, as we have come to expect, had nothing useful to add to the discussion. He mispronounced ‘Hamas’ twice and seemed to mistake Kandahar for Kabul. His rambling peroration before the U.N. General Assembly is a genuine embarrassment to the administration. (Full disclosure: I dated Chris when we were both at Brandeis, not knowing that he was screwing my roommate behind my back—and then he went and married the slut.)”

Or:

“I don’t care what anybody says; I thought this flick was just like kind of kewl. I wanna like totally give major props and a shout-out to Justin Timberlake who was just like incredibly totally awesome. And the other actor—um, it’ll come to me . . . Ewan something . . . yeah, well, he was pretty awesome too. (Full disclosure: I only got my job with this newspaper because my mother works here.)”

Or:

“It was hard to tell from the way the cadaverous Mr. Stallone positioned his face whether he was displaying his right profile because that was his best side or because that was

*Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of Closing Time: A Memoir.*

the one that had had slightly less work done on it than the left. (Full disclosure: Stallone once threw a drink in my face and told me I had a face like a Clydesdale, a face only a mother could love.)

And finally:

"At this point in his career, Mr. Stallone should resist the temptation to kiss nubile young women onscreen. (Full disclosure: Mr. Stallone once told my daughter that she had a face like a Clydesdale. She does. But I love that face.)" ♦

In recent years, guy is often used to signify a macho male, as in, "What a guy."

In *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), Fanny Trollope says nothing about "guys," but she decries the "coarse familiarity, untempered by any shadow of respect, which is assumed by the grossest and the lowest in their intercourse with the highest and most refined." Mrs. Trollope, who lived in the United States in the late 1820s, was irritated by the "extraordinary familiarity" of a neighbor who always addressed her sons by their Christian names, "excepting when she substituted the word 'honey.'" This "familiarity of address," Mrs. Trollope adds, "I afterwards found was universal throughout all ranks in the United States."

Since colonial times familiarity of address has been the norm here. Most Americans strongly believe that their country is a land of equality, so at social gatherings there is no obligation to be deferential to anyone. Or as the legendary figure Paul Bunyan put it, "Since becoming a Real American, I can look any man straight in the eye and tell him to go to hell!" To be sure, in colonial times many, perhaps most, Americans did not regard blacks as equal. Even long after the Civil War some whites called blacks "boy," or worse.

Mrs. Trollope implies that first names should only be used by people who know each other well. But Americans have always been quick to address strangers by their first names. At social gatherings Americans usually address each other by their first names soon after being introduced. Nowadays some people don't even mention their last name when introducing themselves.

I'm not annoyed if someone I've just met calls me Steve at a social gathering, but I am annoyed if someone calls me Steve in a business transaction. I expect a salesman, and even a physician, to call me by my last name and refrain from using his or her first name. I don't mind it if a waitress calls me "honey," but I am irritated when a waiter says, "I'm Joe and



# Manners in Disguise

*What seems like familiarity just might be deference.*

BY STEPHEN MILLER

My wife and I—we are in our early seventies—sit down in a local restaurant. After handing us menus, the waitress returns a few minutes later: "Are you guys ready to order?" she asks. The waitress, who is probably in her early twenties, could be my granddaughter, yet she calls us "guys." A day later a young man selling apples at a local farm market says to my wife and me: "Thanks, guys."

Guys, a collective noun, is now a common form of address that young people often use when talking to a group. I was part of a crowd filing out of a movie theater when the usher (a young man) said: "Guys, the exits and the bathrooms are to the left." Middle-aged waiters and waitresses also say "guys," but I've noticed that they usually prefer "folks," as in: "What will it be, folks?" In the South a waitress will probably say, "Are y'all ready to order?"

It doesn't bother me when my wife and I are addressed as "guys." I use the word myself. Recently my wife and I had dinner with some old friends whom we hadn't seen in three years: "Good to see you guys," I said. Some friends of mine think it is disrespectful

for a young person to call people in their sixties and seventies "guys." Moreover, some people think "guys" and other informal forms of address are overly familiar. They point out that guys would never be used as a term of address in an elegant French or Italian restaurant or, say, by ushers at the Metropolitan Opera.

The use of guys to mean both men and women is relatively new. In the 1960s guys only signified men, as in the musical *Guys and Dolls* (1950). Of course, guys still often refers to a group of men. Guys originally referred to the effigies of Guy Fawkes that were paraded around and burned on Guy Fawkes Day. Fawkes was one of the main conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot, an attempt by Catholics to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605. A 75-year-old English friend of mine who grew up in Newcastle-upon-Tyne said that when he was a kid planning to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night, as it was called, someone would ask: "Do you have a guy?" Now the day is celebrated by bonfires and fireworks.

In 19th-century England "guy" lost its connection to Guy Fawkes but remained pejorative—signifying, the *Oxford English Dictionary* says, "a person of grotesque appearance, esp. with reference to dress." In mid-19th-century America, however, "guy" was a neutral term for "a man, fellow."

Stephen Miller is the author of *Conversation: A History of a Declining Art*.

here to serve you.” I like the fact that the checkout person I usually go to at a local supermarket calls me “Mr. Miller.” I don’t want to call him by his first name, which is on his name tag, so I just say, “Good morning.” I hate it when I answer the phone and a telemarketer says “Steve!”

But I’m not rigid about using last names in a business transaction. I’ve been going to the same Puerto Rican barber for 30 years. He usually first addresses me as Señor Miller, but when we are chatting, he often switches to Steve. I call him Ralph. (In Spanish he is Raife.)

Like everyone, I’ve been addressed in a variety of ways. When I was a kid my friends usually said, “Hey, Miller!” An unpleasant barber used to say to me, “Son, sit still!” I remem-

ber a mean-looking teenager yelling at me, “Hey, you, c’mere!” Instead of running away, I obeyed his command—and he punched me in the face. I have no idea why. A few weeks ago, when I met an old friend for lunch, I said, “Hey, man, how’s it going?” Since my hair now is grayish-white, I am usually addressed as “sir” when I’m by myself.

Do I like “guys” because it makes me feel younger to be in a group addressed as “guys”? Not at all. I know the waitress thinks I’m a geezer. I like the word “guys” for a simple reason: It is a friendly but not overly familiar one-size-fits-all appellation. Young or old, rich or poor, Harvard graduate or high school dropout, fifth-generation American or new immigrant—all Americans are guys. ♦

and why the prose often lacks, shall we say, the light touch—sometimes pedantic, sometimes the verbal equivalent of your dad trying to get funky.

William Irwin, who teaches philosophy at King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, inaugurated the genre with *Seinfeld and Philosophy*. (He is not to be confused with the great clown Bill Irwin, the one sound argument against making “performance art” a capital crime.) *S&P* comes with a blurb from the distinguished octogenarian philosopher Nicholas Rescher of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Royal Society of Canada, and Academia Europaea. The blurbs for Irwin’s *Metallica and Philosophy* have less heft but, in some circles, better name recognition: “The most elucidative dissertation on Metallica ever written. And a kick-ass read to boot!!!—Scott Ian, guitarist for Anthrax.”

Irwin is the reigning impresario of “and Philosophy” books, series editor for the first 25 Open Court titles and now general editor of the Blackwell series. In response to emailed queries, he says that the books for which he has been editor or series editor have, altogether, sold more than a million copies. Who buys them? Mostly, it seems clear, fans wanting tchotchkies. The Open Court web page solicits suggestions for new titles and emphasizes that they should “focus on specific television programs, hit movies, books, video games or trends. Proposals for titles such as ‘Video Games and Philosophy’ or ‘Action Movies and Philosophy,’ are much less appealing than (for example) ‘Grand Theft Auto . . .’ or ‘Kill Bill and Philosophy.’”

Do books like this do any good? Any harm? Do they say anything about The Way We Live Now? I chose a convenient sample: *Seinfeld and Philosophy* (in which I have subject matter expertise); *Superheroes: The Best of Philosophy and Pop Culture* (a free ebook); *The Simpsons and Philosophy* (available at the public library); *The Ultimate Harry Potter and Philosophy* (seen the movies). I intended to hate them. They would be, I assumed, the dreary academic blahblah that



# SpongeBob 101

*The philosophical approach to high and low culture.*

BY DAVID GUASPARI

**S**uperheroes: *The Best of Philosophy and Pop Culture* expounds Immanuel Kant’s defense of retribution as a duty intimately related to “respect, honor, and what it means to be a valuable person living a worthwhile life in a community of other moral persons. When,” on the other hand, “Rorschach administers punishment, say by drowning Big Figure in the toilet,” that seems barbaric. “Indeed, drowning a midget in a toilet isn’t aesthetically pleasing; it doesn’t look ‘right.’”

The weirdly comic juxtaposition of pop culture with the philosophically sublime—Rorschach appears in the (absurdly overpraised) graphic novel *Watchmen*—is the MO of a decade-old, commercially successful genre known as “and Philosophy”

books, e.g.: *The Simpsons and Philosophy*; *SpongeBob SquarePants and Philosophy*; *Metallica and Philosophy*; *The Atkins Diet and Philosophy: Chewing the Fat with Kant and Nietzsche*. Open Court has published 63 such titles in its Popular Culture and Philosophy series and has announced a dozen more; Wiley-Blackwell’s Philosophy and Pop Culture offers 34.

A typical “and Philosophy” book consists of short essays from different hands, each providing an outline of some philosophical topic (justice vs. mercy, personal identity, forgiveness and redemption . . .), historical name checks (Aristotle, Locke, Bishop Butler . . .), and examples familiar to fans of the titular TV show, movie, pop group, or comic book. Most of the authors belong to academic philosophy departments, which may explain why the outlines are generally reliable

David Guaspari is a writer in Ithaca.

disdains all distinctions between low culture and high—as epitomized by the much-quoted dictum that choosing between Pearl Buck and Virginia Woolf is “no different from choosing between a hoagie and a pizza.”

In our email exchange, however, Irwin said that his intellectual hero is E.D. Hirsch—best known to the general public for his book *Cultural Literacy*—and that his own aim is “to communicate with people in terms of what they know, pop culture, to teach them what they don’t know, philosophy.” His editorial introductions take pains to assert that the books use pop culture as a source of examples, not of philosophical wisdom or depth.

Popularizing philosophy, he has written, should be as respectable, and valued, as popularizing science. That argument does have a weakness: A popular book on science assumes that readers are interested in its subject; an “and Philosophy” book assumes that they are not but hopes that something might rub off. A quick test of the rub-off theory: The Amazon.com page for *Seinfeld and Philosophy* lists the works it cites, beginning thus: *Philosophical Investigations*; *Being and Nothingness*; *Thus Spake Zarathustra*; *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (can’t say I’d heard of that one); *War and Peace*; *Dialogues of Plato*. It also lists the books that “customers who bought this item also bought”: *Seinlanguage*; *Seinology*; *Scene it? Seinfeld*; the *Seinfeld Trivia Game*; and, branching out, *The Simpsons and Philosophy*.

Okay, that was a cheap shot. Here, for balance, are nano-essays that I call “and Philosophy” and Philosophy”:

1. Aristotle. Each of the books I examined based at least one essay on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which presents the best life as the result of cultivating and developing *virtues*, habitual dispositions to appropriate action. That is a natural fit, since the pop culture referents of these books tell stories; and stories are about characters, and therefore about character. If any Aristotle rubs off, it’s also a public service, since his account of ethics is the best one going.

2. Kierkegaard. *Seinfeld’s Cosmo*

Kramer proves a surprisingly apt illustration of Kierkegaard’s “aesthetic” mode of life. Aesthetic man is in flight from boredom and despair, but trapped there in “rotation”—living in the moment, in constantly and arbitrarily changing worlds devised in his own imagination. But the author of this essay (unlike Kierkegaard) errs when he domesticates the truly eerie Kramer as merely a “beloved nutball.”

3. Desperation. One contributor was saddled with tying *Seinfeld*—“The Show about Nothing”—to the philosophical concept of nothing. And nothing is what he had to work with, as suggested by this desperate segue: “Jerry and George clearly do not know Chinese philosophy, but they do know Chinese food.” That is a frequent failing: essays for which the pop culture is merely a hook, and a flimsy one.

Is it likely that a passing reference to Maggie, Homer Simpson’s non-speaking baby, will lure an otherwise uninterested *Simpsons* fan into a discussion of the relation between words and thoughts?

4. Who is Slavoj Žižek? A “Marxist Lacanian” and author of the aforementioned and hitherto-unknown-to-me *Sublime Object of Ideology*—since whose publication, according to a Wikipedia entry seemingly written by a nonnative speaker of English (or a graduate student), “he has continued to develop his status as a confrontational intellectual.” Žižek’s work is used to explicate the way in which *Seinfeld’s* J. Peterman reveals to us that “the Subject . . . is constituted and maintained through ideology.” I approached this essay phenomenologically, to experience it as it would be experienced by a typical reader of S&P. I skipped it.

5. Harry Potter. Of the books in my sample, *The Ultimate Harry Potter* seemed most likely to realize Irwin’s stated goals. Many of its essays ruminate, in a pleasingly old-fashioned way, on what the Harry Potter story says about such things as love, death, destiny, loyalty, self-knowledge, and the soul. One of the best discusses the redemption of Snape by love,

understood as St. Thomas understands it—which is not to be in the grip of a feeling but “to will the good of another.” Try not to be put off by the occasionally reverential tone: The foreword, for example, speaks with a straight face about “Potter scholars,” and an essay concludes with the sentiment that “As we follow Harry . . . we become better people.”

6. Funny vs. jokey. The *Seinfeld* and *Simpsons* books can be very funny—when they quote dialogue or summarize plot twists. Jokey is different: an elbow in the ribs, an exclamation point at the end of a punch line. The dutifully wacky entry in each contributor’s biography is jokey (“Kelly owns the world’s largest Malibu Stacy collection”). So is “epistemology tries to answer questions about how we know stuff.” “Stuff” is not, as its author presumably intended, “nonthreatening,” or hip, or a show of learning worn lightly. It’s an insult.

7. Where credit is due, and where it is not. Might these books disserve their readers, empty calories dulling the appetite for, and the ability to savor, the real thing? I think not, for they don’t pretend to be what they’re not. The gluttony of Homer Simpson offers less matter for reflection than the gluttony of Falstaff—but to offer it as a topic for bedtime reading is not vandalism. It’s not like offering an academic program of *Simpsons* studies. A Google search suggests that a degree in that specialty is not (yet) available, but suitable merchandise has appeared on term paper websites, which presumably respond to demand. There is, for example, an “analytical essay” with insights like “As a moving, ever expanding satire, [Homer Simpson] is at once the best and worst of American dadness.”

My attempt to hate “and Philosophy” books failed, although I think their edifying potential is modest and I dissent from the cover blurbs praising their “brilliance” and “fun.” The contributors are no doubt intelligent and well meaning, but it takes a kind of genius, an Orwell or a Robert Warshow, to mine deep things from shallow subjects. ♦

# In Love with Love

*A new rendition of an old-fashioned theme.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**T**he swoony romantic drama, once a staple of the cinema, is all but nonexistent now. These movies—the ones that immortalized the longing glance, the furtive sigh, the agonized sob—have been superseded by purported comedies with no jokes in them, films in which stunningly attractive and successful and clever and witty women can't even buy a date and spend the entire movie bumbling around until they decide to marry either their best friend or someone they've never met.

So it's refreshing to come across *Like Crazy*, the small, sharply observed, and precise new independent film by a writer-director with the unforgettable name of Drake Doremus. *Like Crazy* is nothing more or less than the story of two beautiful young people crazy in love and what happens to them when the world conspires to keep them apart.

Doremus was directly inspired by *A Man and a Woman*, Claude Lelouch's blockbuster French film from 1966 in which a gorgeous but depressed widow and a chic but haunted race car driver gambol about Paris and Deauville. *A Man and a Woman* commercialized the art-film techniques innovated by the directors of the French "New Wave" (François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol) and made them palatable for a worldwide audience. The movie also revolutionized the look of perfume ads and commercials and anything else that tried then and still tries to sell itself as hip and chic.

*John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.*

## Like Crazy

Directed by Drake Doremus



Indeed, one of the reasons that the swoony romance died is that around holiday time, we can see a minute-long version every half an hour in those commercials selling a diamond from De Beers or a car in the driveway with



*Felicity Jones*

a big bow on it. (The message of these ads is, quite simply, that a jewel or an auto is a husband's best, perhaps only, shot at getting lucky with his wife.)

In *Like Crazy*, Jacob (Anton Yelchin) and Anna (Felicity Jones) get together in the last semester of their college years at UCLA. He's American, she's English, and she has to go back to London for a few months after school ends because of her visa status. But mad with passion, she can't bear to leave him. The consequences of that decision dominate the rest of the film.

The dialogue between Yelchin and Jones was entirely improvised, and in one sense that was a bad decision, as, judging from the talk we hear, they aren't especially clever or articulate. But in another sense, it was inspired, because the dullness

of their exchanges underlines the movie's rueful understanding of just how immature and unformed Jacob and Anna are. They don't share much except a love of Paul Simon; she's a standard-issue would-be writer and he's a talented furniture designer.

Jacob and Anna are more in love with being in love than they are with each other, and the drama that results from their extended separations later in the movie is the great drama of their lives. The turmoil is settled, somewhat chillingly, in the movie's brilliant and cool-eyed final scene.

While *A Man and a Woman* might be its inspiration, the work that *Like Crazy* most resembles thematically is *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, the strange, indelible, and remarkably wise 1964 film by Jacques Demy. In every respect *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* is the swooniest romance ever made, the story of a spectacularly beautiful teenage shopkeeper's daughter, played by Catherine Deneuve, who falls hard for a handsome garage mechanic. Every word in the movie is sung, set to a famously catchy pop score by Michel Legrand, and the near-operatic quality that produces is heightened by Demy's meticulous use of gorgeous color photography in what is one of the most beautiful movies ever made.

And one of the most interesting, because the story *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* tells is anything but romantic. This is a tale of how love fades, how quotidian responsibilities come to overwhelm the passions that seem at first to be the only things that make life worth living, and how even those who indulge in *grands amours* most deeply and heedlessly eventually make compromises with reality.

The open conflict between the movie's message and its mood is the key to the enduring power of *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. Drake Doremus's *Like Crazy* never reaches its euphoric highs or its devastating lows, but it displays a worldly sophistication and an unsentimentality that make it a surprisingly bracing moviegoing experience. ♦

**"SeaWorld's orcas have been illegally enslaved for years and should be freed under the Constitution's 13th amendment, asserts a lawsuit that will be filed Wednesday in San Diego."**

**—San Diego Union Tribune, October 25, 2011**

**PARODY**

# OBAMA 2012

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

MEMO

October 25, 2012

From: David Axelrod  
To: David Plouffe  
CC: Valerie Jarrett, Lightworker-in-Chief

Following the summer double dip, we all know the election map looks awfully bleak. The good news is that the courts just handed us a gift, though I confess it caught us all a little flatfooted. When the SeaWorld lawsuit emerged exactly a year ago today, it wasn't even on our radar screen. I knew the Ninth Circuit was a grab bag of judicial crazy, but no one thought it would go this far.

Now that Aquatic Americans have become full-fledged citizens, that means voting rights. This could be exactly what we needed to push us over the edge in coastal swing states such as Florida and North Carolina. However, with less than two weeks before the election, to say that this presents daunting financial and logistical challenges would be an understatement.

- We're currently scrambling to get our hands on enough scuba gear to perform voter registration drives on the scale that we would like.
- Holder is being leaned on to produce DOJ guidelines protecting the enfranchisement of this vulnerable minority class. If coastal states can't set up enough offshore voting precincts in time, we may be able to challenge any unfavorable results provided the vote is close.
- Messaging is an issue. Marine biologists aren't overly certain of our ability to communicate with whales (talking to one of them sounds like somebody got into the wacky tabacky and put "Dark Side of the Moon" on backwards). But from what we can tell, it appears that O's oft-quoted promise that his presidency would mark "the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow" hasn't been received well.
- We're cutting the ads as we speak. Of all the ideas kicked around thus far, the negative spot portraying Romney as Ahab, thrusting at the camera a harpoon labeled "entitlement cuts," seems to be testing the best.
- I know this amounts to a Hail Mary, but maybe we need to think about dropping Biden from the ticket again for someone more appealing to this new constituency. I don't put too much faith in snap polls, but the early word is that a good chunk of the whale vote identifies with GOP vice-presidential nominee Chris Christie because they feel he's "one of us."

Bottom line: We've got our work cut out for us. Some people might suggest that registering enough whales to swing the election would amount to a "fluke" -- but I say, yes we can.

P.S. I know there was some disagreement over this, but we're still on to have the president walk Kim down the aisle for the season opener of "Keeping Up With The Kardashians," right? A lot of key demos will be watching that, and I say second time's the charm for both Kim and Barack.